



The French Riviera & Monaco

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

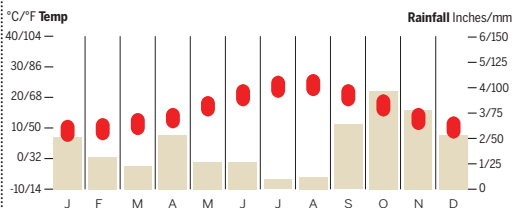
With its glistening seas, idyllic beaches and fabulous weather, the Riviera encapsulates many people's idea of the good life. The beauty is that there is so much more to do than just going to the beach – although the Riviera does take beach-going *very* seriously: from nudist beach to secluded cove or exclusive club, there is something for everyone.

Culture vultures will revel in the region's thriving art scene: the Riviera has some fine museums, including world-class modern art, and a rich history to explore in Roman ruins, WWII memorials and excellent museums.

Foodies for their part will rejoice at the prospect of lingering in fruit and veg markets, touring vineyards and feasting on some of France's best cuisines, whilst outdoor enthusiasts will be spoilt for choice with coastal paths to explore, and snorkelling and swimming galore.

When to Go

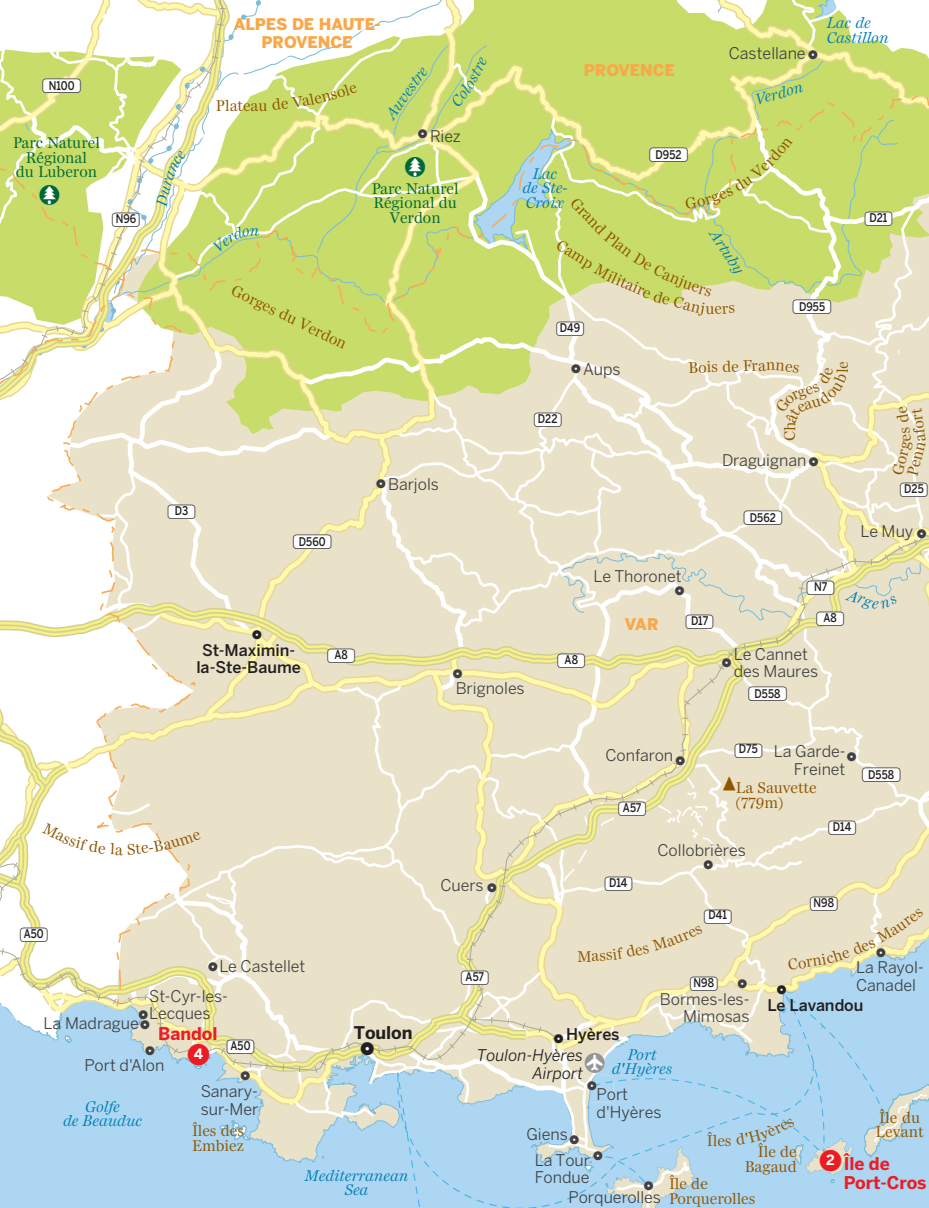
Monaco



February Carnival season, with two weeks of festivities in Nice and Menton.

May Jet-setters descend on the Riviera for the Grand Prix and the Cannes Film Festival.

July Fireworks on 14 July, outdoor clubbing in Cannes and jazz in Antibes.



The French Riviera & Monaco Highlights

- 1 Try your luck at Monaco's opulent **casino** (p859)
- 2 Catch a ferry to **Île de Port-Cros** (p853) for pristine Mediterranean seascapes
- 3 Enjoy a fabulous day at a **St-Tropez beach club** (p849)



4 Wind your way through Bando's vineyards and try some of the area's famed wines at **Maison des Vins** (p855)

5 Dress to impress and party the night away in **Cannes** (p844)

6 Take a scenic drive along the **Grande Corniche** (p857) for jaw-dropping views of the Med

7 Retrace Matisse's steps in and around **Nice** (p825)

History

The eastern part of France's Mediterranean coast, including the area now known as the Côte d'Azur, was occupied by the Ligurians from the 1st millennium BC. It was colonised around 600 BC by Greeks from Asia Minor, who settled along the coast in the areas of Massalia (present-day Marseille), Hyères, St-Tropez, Antibes and Nice. Called in to help Massalia against the threat of invasion by Celto-Ligurians from Entremont, the Romans triumphed in 125 BC. They created Provincia Romana – the area between the Alps, the sea and the River Rhône – which ultimately became Provence.

In 1388 Nice, along with the Haute-Provence mountain towns of Barcelonnette and Puget-Théniers, was incorporated into the House of Savoy, while the rest of the surrounding Provençal region became part of the French kingdom in 1482. Following an agreement between Napoléon III and the House of Savoy in 1860, the Austrians were ousted and France took possession of Savoy.

Within the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur *région*, the Côte d'Azur encompasses most of the *départements* of the Alpes-Maritimes and the Var. In the 19th century, wealthy tourists flocked to the area to escape the cold northern winter, along with celebrated artists and writers, adding to the area's cachet. Little fishing ports morphed into exclusive resorts. Paid holidays for all French workers from 1936 and improved transportation saw visitors arrive in summer, making it a year-round holiday playground. But it's not all play, no work: since the late 20th century, the area inland of Antibes has been home to France's 'Silicon Valley', Sophia Antipolis, the country's largest industrial/technological hub.

Dangers & Annoyances

The Côte d'Azur isn't a dangerous area, but theft – from backpacks, pockets, bags, cars and even laundrettes – is common. Watch your belongings, especially at train and bus stations, on overnight trains, and on the

beach. Keep your passport, credit cards and cash on your person, not in your bags. Drive with the doors locked and windows up as thieves often pounce at red lights. If you're travelling by bicycle, store it off-street overnight.

i Getting There & Away

Efficient **SNCF** (www.voyages-sncf.com) train and bus connections link the Riviera with Provence and the rest of France. Excellent road networks make the region easy to access by car, except in July and August when bumper-to-bumper traffic snarls along major arteries, most notoriously around St-Tropez. **LER** (www.info-ler.fr) buses operate between Provence and the Riviera. Nice and Toulon have international airports – the former is the country's second busiest.

For ferries to Corsica, from Nice and Toulon, see p873.

8 Getting Around

SNCF trains run along the coast between St-Raphaël and the Italian border, and spur north to Grasse. There are no trains along the coast between St-Raphaël and Toulon; this area is served by regularly operating buses. Ferries cross to St-Tropez – which we highly recommend over driving.

Except for high-summer season traffic, the Riviera is easily accessible by car – which you'll need, if you want to ditch the tourist circuit. The fastest route (by far) is the uninspiring, speed-camera- and road-toll-ridden A8 motorway, which originates near Aix-en-Provence, dips towards the coast at Fréjus, skirts the Estérel range, then runs roughly parallel to the coast, from Cannes to the Italian border at Ventimiglia (Vintimille, in French).

NICE TO TOULON

Nice

POP 352,400

Most people come here for the light. Me, I'm from the north. What moved me are January's radiant colours and luminosity of daylight.

Henri Matisse

ACCOMMODATION WARNING

Accommodation can be impossible to find, not to mention prohibitively expensive, during the Cannes Film Festival and the Monaco Grand Prix (both held in May). This applies to the coast between Menton and Cannes but doesn't affect areas beyond Massif de l'Estérel (St-Raphaël, St-Tropez etc).

July and August are busy everywhere, so if you have your heart set on staying at a particular hotel, make sure you book well in advance to avoid disappointment.

The words are Matisse's but they could be those of any painter, or, in fact, of any visitor who comes to Nice, for it's true: the light here is magical. The city also offers exceptional quality of life: shimmering Mediterranean shores, the very best of Mediterranean food, a unique historical heritage and Alpine wilderness within an hour's drive. No wonder so many young French people aspire to live here and tourists keep flooding in.

History

Nice was founded around 350 BC by the Greek seafarers who had settled Marseille. They named the colony Nikaia, apparently to commemorate a nearby victory (*nike* in Greek). In 154 BC the Greeks were followed by the Romans, who settled further uphill around what is now Cimiez, where there are still Roman ruins.

By the 10th century, Nice was ruled by the counts of Provence but turned to Amadeus VII of the House of Savoy in 1388. In the 18th and 19th centuries it was occupied several times by the French, but didn't definitively become part of France until 1860, when Napoléon III struck a deal (known as the Treaty of Turin) with the House of Savoy.

During the Victorian period, the English aristocracy and European royalty enjoyed Nice's mild winter climate. Throughout the 20th century, the city's exceptional art scene spanned every movement from Impressionism to new realism. The new tram

line (customised by local and international artists) and the decision to open all museums for free in 2008 show that art is still very much a part of city life.

Sights

Nice has a number of world-class sights but the star attraction is probably the city itself: atmospheric, beautiful and photogenic, it's a wonderful place to stroll or watch the world go by, so make sure you leave yourself plenty of time to soak it all in.

VIEUX NICE

Vieux Nice

OLD TOWN

Leave your maps and books behind and embrace Nice's labyrinthine baroque old town. There is something unique about this tangle of alleyways and backstreets bursting with local life and history. The northern end of this historical centre, running against bd Jean Jaurès, is packed with shops and holes in the wall, all claiming to sell *spécialités niçoises* more genuine than their neighbours'. Further south, atmospheric squares are filled with cafés, street artists and delighted *flâneurs* (strollers). Cours Saleya, running parallel to the seafront at the southern end of Vieux Nice, is the venue for one of the most vibrant, vividly hued local **markets** in the south of France.

Jutting above the rooflines are the spires of some historic churches, including the baroque **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate** (place Rossetti) and its stunning glazed terracotta

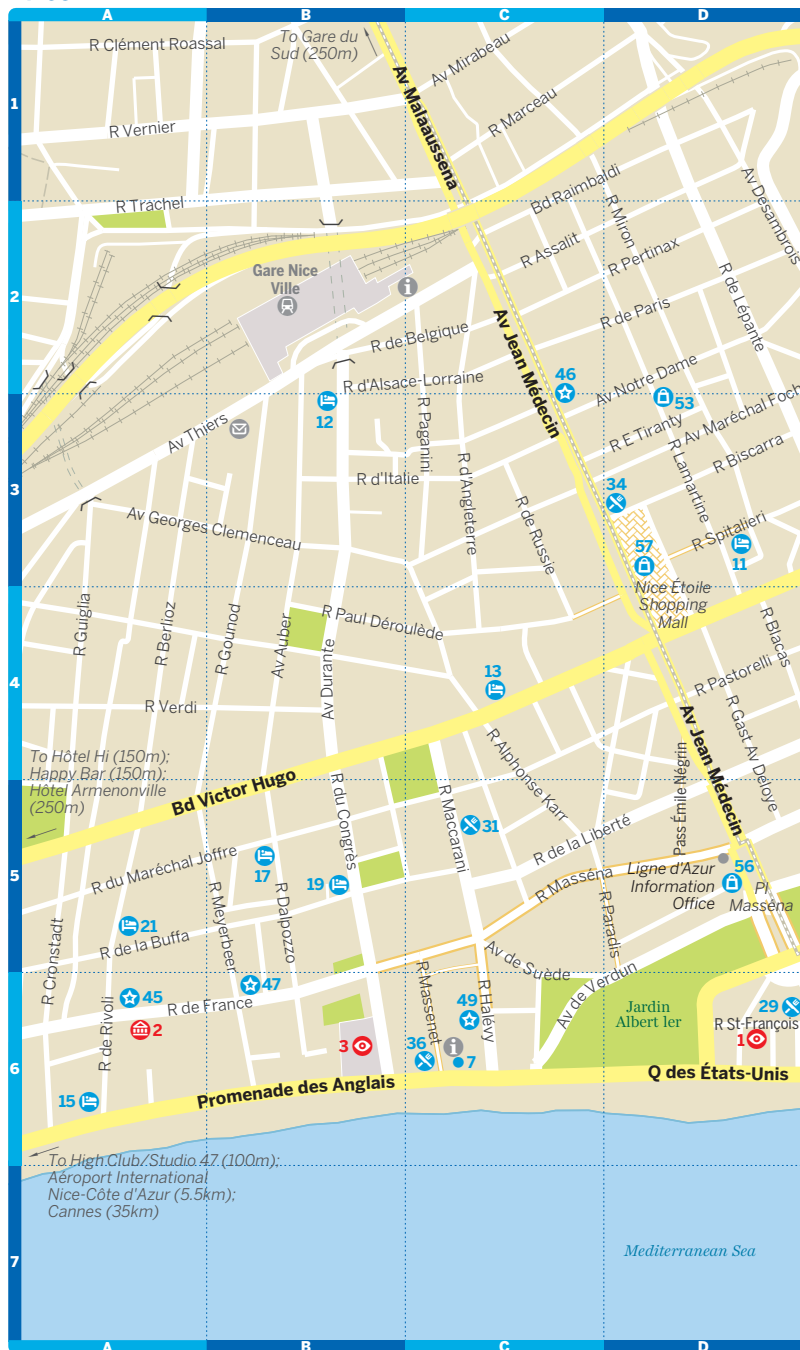
NICE IN...

Two Days

Kick-start the day with an invigorating walk or in-line skate along **Promenade des Anglais**. Browse the fragrant flower and produce **markets** for picnic supplies to take up to the **Colline du Château**. Amble the little alleys of **Vieux Nice**, then laze away the afternoon on the beach, or sail the **Baie des Anges** on a catamaran. Settle down for dinner at the fabulous **Luc Salsedo** and round off the night in your favourite **bar**. The following day, trace Matisse's artistic evolution at the **Musée Matisse**. Grab some Nice-style tapas at **Chez René Socca** for lunch before immersing yourself in Nice's belle époque history at the beautiful **Musée Masséna**. Finish your day with a long aperitif at **Les Distilleries Idéales** and a flamboyant dinner of Italian fare at **Luna Rossa**.

Four Days

Traverse the twisting cliff-side **corniches** (coastal roads) to the medieval village of **Èze**. Walk down **Nietzsche's path** to Èze-sur-Mer and catch the train to **Monaco** for a punt at the **Casino de Monte Carlo**, a tour of the aquarium at the **Musée Océanographique de Monaco** and a taste of the principality's culinary delights at **Bar Nautique**. On the fourth day, go inland to **Grasse** to tour its **perfumeries** and, in season, flower-filled fields, or venture west to tackle one of the 100-odd hiking trails criss-crossing the jagged red crags of the **Massif de l'Estérel**.





📍 Top Sights

Cathédrale Ste-Réparate	F5
Chapelle de la Miséricorde	F6
Colline du Château	G6
Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (Mamac)	G4
Vieux Nice	F6

📍 Sights

Ascenseur	(see 4)
1 Hôtel Beau Rivage	D6
2 Musée Masséna	A6
3 Palais de la Méditerranée	B6
4 Tour Bellanda	G6
5 WWI Memorial	G7

Activities, Courses & Tours

6 Centre du Patrimoine	G2
7 Guided Walking Tours of Vieux Nice	C6
8 Le Poséidon	H6
9 Roller Station	G2
10 Trans Côte d'Azur	H6

🛏 Sleeping

11 Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Camélias	D3
12 Belle Meunière	B3
13 Exedra	C4
14 Hôtel La Pérouse	G7
15 Hôtel Negresco	A6
16 Hôtel Wilson	E4
17 Hôtel Windsor	B5
18 Le Petit Palais	F2
19 Nice Garden Hôtel	B5
20 Villa la Tour	G4
21 Villa Rivoli	A5

🍴 Eating

22 Acchiardo	H2
23 Café de Turin	G4
24 Chez René Socca	G4

25 Delhi Belhi	H2
26 Fenocchio	H1
27 Fruit & Vegetable Market	G2
28 La Merenda	F1
29 La Petite Maison	D6
30 La Table Alziari	G4
Le Safari	(see 40)
31 Luc Salsedo	C5
32 Luna Rossa	E5
33 Monoprix	G4
34 Monoprix	D3
35 Pasta Basta	H2
36 Sarao	C6
37 Zucca Magica	H5

🍷 Drinking

38 Bliss Bar	G1
39 Chez Wayne's	G1
40 La Civette du Cours	H2
41 Le Six	F2
42 Les Distilleries Idéales	H2
43 Ma Nolan's	F2

🎬 Entertainment

44 Cinéma Nouveau Mercury	H4
45 Cinéma Rialto	A6
46 Fnac	C2
47 La Havane	B6
48 Le Bar des Oiseaux	G1
49 Le Klub	C6
50 Le Smarties	F3
51 Les Trois Diables	G2
52 Opéra de Nice	E6

🛍 Shopping

53 Cat's Whiskers	D3
54 Cave de la Tour	G4
55 Flower Market	G2
Food Market	(see 27)
56 Maison de la Presse	D5
57 Nice Étoile Shopping Mall	D3

dome, built around 1650, and the exuberantly mid-18th-century **Chapelle de la Miséricorde** (cours Saleya).

Perpendicular to rue Rossetti is the notorious **rue Benoît Bunico**, Nice's old Jewish ghetto, where a 1430 law ordered Jews to be locked in by gates at each end of the street from sunset to dawn.

Colline du Château

PARK

From this 92m hilltop park, the glittering views of the Vieux Nice spires and Baie des Anges are mesmerising.

The shaded hill and park, at the eastern end of quai des États-Unis, are named after a 12th-century château that was razed by Louis XIV in a fit of pique in 1706 and never rebuilt. To reach the park you can walk up montée Lesage, climb the steps at the eastern end of rue Rossetti or take the **ascenseur** (lift; per person €1.10; ☀9am-7pm) under Tour Bellanda.

Port Lympia

PORT

Nice's port, with its beautiful Venetian-coloured buildings, is often overlooked, but

a stroll along its quays is lovely, as is the walk to get here: come down through the Colline du Château or follow quai Rauba Capeu, the atmospheric headland at the end of the promenade where a massive **memorial** hewn from the rock commemorates the 4000 Niçois who died in both world wars.

CIMIEZ

Cimiez used to be the playground of European aristocrats wintering on the Riviera. These days, it's Nice's affluent residents who live in the area's beautiful Victorian villas.

FREE Musée Matisse

ART MUSEUM

(www.musee-matisse-nice.org; 164 av des Arènes de Cimiez; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Housed in a 17th-century Genoese mansion, this small museum reveals Matisse's evolution as an artist rather than wowing the crowds with masterpieces. There are some well-known works such as the blue paper cut-outs *Blue Nude IV* and *Woman with Amphora*, but you'll also see a number of lesser-known sculptures and experimental pieces using cloth, paper, oils, ink etc.

Take bus 17 from the bus station or bus 22 from place Masséna to the Arènes stop.

Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall

ART MUSEUM

(Marc Chagall Biblical Message Museum; www.mu-see-chagall.fr, in French; 4 av Dr Ménard; adult/child €7.50/5.50; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon) This small museum houses the largest public collection

of the Russian-born artist's seminal paintings of *Old Testament* scenes. Be sure to peek through the plate-glass window across a reflecting pond to view a mosaic of the rose window at Metz Cathedral. Take bus 22 from place Masséna (Masséna/Guitry stop) to the front of the museum or walk. The same bus goes to the Musée Matisse. Chagall (1887–1985) is buried in St-Paul de Vence.

FREE Musée et Site Archéologiques

ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM

(Archaeological Museum & Site; 160 av des Arènes de Cimiez; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Nice's little-spoken but lingering language, Nissart, derives most of its vocabulary from the Roman city of Cemenelum, founded by Augustus in 14 BC. Its ruins lie behind the Musée Matisse, on the eastern side of the Parc des Arènes, and are the focus of the Musée et Site Archéologiques. You'll need a little imagination to picture the public baths, amphitheatre and original paved streets signposted across the site, but the relics inside the museum such as ceramics, glass, coins and tools bring it to life.

CENTRAL NICE

Promenade des Anglais

PROMENADE

Established by English expats in 1822, this wide, palm-lined promenade is a timelessly elegant place for a beachfront stroll. The Promenade des Anglais is lined with grand buildings, chief amongst them the

MAGICAL MATISSE TOUR

If you're mad about Matisse, you can cherry-pick a Côte d'Azur itinerary that takes in some of the major sites of his life.

Born on New Year's Eve in 1869, Henri Matisse arrived in Nice from Paris in 1917 to recover from bronchitis. He remained here until his death in 1954 at his home and studio in the mansion-lined suburb, Cimiez.

Checking into the **Hôtel Beau Rivage**, he went on to rent a flat on quai des États-Unis, then moved to what is now the **Palais de la Méditerranée**, a luxury hotel on the Promenade des Anglais, where he also exhibited. Many of the works he painted in Nice are housed in the city's **Musée Matisse**.

Matisse's visits to **Renoir's villa** (see p836) in Cagnes-sur-Mer provided further inspiration for paintings, including the 1917 *Oliviers, Jardin de Renoir à Cagnes* (Olive Trees, Renoir's Garden in Cagnes).

During WWII Matisse rented **Villa Le Rève** (www.villalerevevence.com; 261 av Henri Matisse, Vence), where he was visited by Picasso and Aragon, among others. It was during his stay in Vence that he designed the **Chapelle du Rosaire** (p838). Villa Le Rève now hosts regular painting workshops.

Matisse is buried at the **Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez** (Cimiez Notre Dame Monastery; ☎8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm), near the Musée Matisse; signs lead to his grave.

Tourist offices throughout the Riviera have an info-packed brochure (available in English) about tracing Matisse's footsteps.

THE PINE CONE TRAIN

Chugging between the mountains and the sea, the narrow-gauge railway **Train des Pignes** (Pine Cone Train; www.trainprovence.com) is one of Provence's most picturesque rides. Rising to 1000m, with breathtaking views, the 151km track between Nice and Digne-les-Bains passes through Haute Provence's scarcely populated back country.

The service runs five times a day and is ideal for a day trip inland. The beautiful medieval village of **Entrevaux** is just 1½ hours from Nice (return €18), perfect for a picnic and a wander through its historic centre and citadel.

1912 pink-domed **Hôtel Negresco**. Another landmark is art deco **Palais de la Méditerranée**, saved from demolition in the 1980s and now part of a luxury hotel.

It's generally warm enough to swim from April to October, when beaches teem with sun seekers. If you're not much of a water babe, there are dedicated cycling and skating lanes on the promenade.

FREE

Musée Masséna

CITY MUSEUM

(65 rue de France; ☎10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Housed in a marvellous Italianate neoclassical villa (1898), this museum explores the city and Riviera's history from the early 19th century to WWII. It's a fascinating journey, with a roll call of monarchs, a succession of nationalities (British, Russians, Americans), the advent of tourism, the prominence of the carnival and much more. History is told through an excellent mix of furniture, objects, art deco posters, early photographs and paintings and the lovely setting – the city of Nice still uses the ground floor rooms for official occasions.

FREE

Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (Mamac)

ART MUSEUM

(Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art; www.mamac-nice.org; Promenade des Arts; ☎10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Designed by Yves Bayard and Henri Vidal, Mamac is worth a visit for its stunning architecture alone, but it also houses some fantastic avant-garde art from the 1960s to the present. Exhibits include iconic pop art from Roy Lichtenstein and

Andy Warhol's 1965 *Campbell's Soup Can*. The marbled towers' glass walkways lead to highlights like Niki de St-Phalle's papier-mâché sculptures and a shopping trolley wrapped by Christo. An awesome panorama of Vieux Nice unfolds from the rooftop garden/gallery, which features works by Nice-born Yves Klein (1928–62).

Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas

CATHEDRAL

(Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St-Nicolas; Av Nicolas II; admission €3; ☎9am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-5pm Sun) Crowned by six multicoloured onion domes, the Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas is the largest cathedral outside Russia. It was built between 1902 and 1912 for Nice's growing Russian community. Shorts, miniskirts and sleeveless shirts are forbidden.



Activities

In-line skating

Smooth and flat, with great views to boot, Nice's seafront provides 7km of perfect skating ground between the port and the airport.

Roller Station

IN-LINE SKATING

(www.roller-station.fr, in French; 49 quai des États-Unis) Rents out skates for €7 a day and bikes for €15 a day. Some ID is required as a deposit.

Beaches & Water Sports

You'll need at least a beach mat to cushion your tush from Nice's pebbled beaches. On the beach, operators hire out catamarans, paddleboats and jet skis; you can also parasail, waterski or paraglide. There are showers and toilets on every beach.

Plages privées

BEACHES

(private beaches; www.pagesdenice.com, in French; ☎May-Sep) Free sections of beach alternate with 15 sun lounge-lined private beaches, for which you have to pay by renting a chair (around €15 a day) or mattress (around €10).

Le Poséidon

DIVING

(☎04 92 00 43 86; www.poseidon-nice.com; quai Lunel; introductory dives €45) Offers PADI courses and runs diving expeditions in English.

Nice Diving

DIVING

(☎04 93 89 42 44; www.nicediving.com; 14 quai des Docks) Runs PADI courses and diving expeditions in English. An introductory dive costs around €45, with equipment.

Tours

Guided walking tours

WALKING TOURS

The tourist office runs 2½-hour **walking tours** (adult/child €12/6; ☀9.30am Sat) of Vieux Nice, in English, departing from the main office on the promenade des Anglais. The **Centre du Patrimoine** (☎04 92 00 41 90; www.nice.fr, in French) also runs 11 thematic two-hour walking tours (adult/child €5/2.50). English-language tours must be booked two days in advance. The tourist office has a full listing.

Trans Côte d'Azur

BOAT TOURS

(www.trans-cote-azur.com, in French; quai Lunel; ☀Apr-Oct) Runs scenic one-hour coastal cruises (adult/child €15/9) as well as day trips to the Îles de Lérins (adult/child €34/24), St-Tropez (adult/child €55/41) and Monaco (adult/child €32/23).



Festivals & Events

Carnaval de Nice

CARNIVAL

(www.nicecarnaval.com) This two-week carnival, held in February, is particularly famous for its battles of flowers, where thousands of blooms are tossed into the crowds from passing floats, as well as its fantastic fireworks display.

Nice Jazz Festival

MUSIC FESTIVAL

(www.nicejazzfestival.fr) In July Nice swings to the week-long jazz festival at the Arènes de Cimiez, amid the Roman ruins.



Sleeping

Nice has a suite of places to sleep, from stellar independent backpacker hostels to international art-filled icons. Prices jump during summer and also for regional festivals such as Monaco's Grand Prix or the Cannes Film Festival.



Villa Rivoli

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 88 80 25; www.villa-rivoli.com; 10 rue de Rivoli; s €85-155, d €99-175, q €210; 🏠) Built in 1890, this stately villa feels like your own pied-à-terre in the heart of Nice. A marble staircase leads to spotlessly clean character-rich rooms, some with fabric-covered walls, gilt-edged mirrors and marble mantelpieces. Take breakfast in the garden's sun-dappled shade, or in the grand belle époque salon. Eight of the 26 rooms face the street and (until 2011) have single-pane glass; light-sleepers, book a room by the garden.



RIVIERA PASS

If you're planning on making many visits and taking many tours in and around Nice, the **Nice Riviera Pass** (see www.frenchrivierapass.com) is a good option for saving a few bob. Available for one, two or three days, it costs €24/36/54 and gives you free entry to Nice's paying sites – the Marc Chagall museum and the Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas. It also includes guided tours organised by Nice's tourist office and the Centre du Patrimoine, as well as a number of regional attractions such as the Jardin Exotique and the Musée Océanographique in Monaco, the Musée Renoir in Cagnes-sur-Mer and the Musée Picasso in Antibes. The pass also offers reductions in a number of shops and restaurants. Check the website for full listings.

Hôtel Windsor

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 88 59 35; www.hotelwindsornice.com; 11 rue Dalpozzo; d €120-175; 🏠🍷🍷) Though owned by the same family since 1942, there's nothing traditional about the Windsor. Underground graffiti artists decorated several of the oversize rooms, with aggressive splashes of colour. Traditional rooms are more soothing yet still nod to the arts with hand-painted wall murals. Rooms facing the backyard tropical garden have single-pane glass but a lush view; choose these over street-side, unless you're a light sleeper. Warm service compensates for the unheated pool.

Hôtel La Pérouse

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 93 62 34 63; www.hotel-la-perouse.com; 11 quai Rauba Capeu; d €260-510; 🏠🍷🍷) Built into the rock cliff next to Tour Bellanda, La Pérouse captures the vibe of a genteel villa. Lower-floor rooms face the lemon-tree-shaded courtyard and infinity pool; upper-floor rooms have magnificent vistas of the promenade and sea. Smart accent colours add flair to otherwise traditional decor; big marble bathroom vanities provide space to unpack. Excellent service. Private beach.

Nice Garden Hôtel

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 87 35 63; www.nicegardenhotel.com; 11 rue du Congrès; s/d €75/100; 🏠🍷) Behind heavy iron gates hides this little gem of a hotel: the nine beautifully appointed

rooms, the work of the exquisite Marion, are a subtle blend of old and new and overlook a delightful garden with a glorious orange tree. Amazingly, all this charm and peacefulness is just two blocks from the promenade.

Villa Saint-Exupéry

HOSTEL €

(0204 93 84 42 83; www.villahostels.com; 22 av Gravier; dm €25-30, s/d €45/90; @☎🚶) Why can't all hostels be like this? Set in a lovely converted monastery in the north of the city, this is a great place to put down your bags for a few days. Chill out in the 24-hour common room housed in the old stained-glass chapel, sip a €1 beer on the barbecue terrace, cook in the state-of-the-art self-catering kitchen, and stock up on travel tips. The villa staff will come and pick you up from the nearby Comte de Falicon tram stop or St-Maurice stop for Bus 23 (direct from the airport) when you first arrive. Rates include breakfast.

Hôtel Wilson

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €

(0204 93 85 47 79; www.hotel-wilson-nice.com; 39 rue de l'Hôtel des Postes; s/d €50/55; ☎) Many years of travelling, an experimental nature and exquisite taste have turned Jean-Marie's rambling flat into a compelling place to stay. The 16 rooms have individual, carefully crafted decor, and share the eclectic dining room. Mind the two resident tortoises as you sit down for a breakfast of fresh bread and croissants (served until a very civilised noon). The hotel is on the third floor and there's no elevator.

Le Petit Palais

HOTEL €€

(0204 93 62 19 11; www.petitpalaisnice.fr, in French; 17 av Émile-Bieckert; d €150; ☎🚶) Near Cimiez' breezy heights, this yellow neoclassical mansion offers breathtaking views of Nice – the views get better with every floor you climb (three in total). Ground-floor rooms are deprived of vistas but make up for it with private gardens. Decor is elegant throughout. The only downside is the *steep* 10 minutes' walk from bd Carabacel.

Villa la Tour

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(0204 93 80 08 15; www.villa-la-tour.com; 4 rue de la Tour; s/d €78/89; ☎@) Small but perfectly formed, the Villa la Tour is delightful, with warm, romantic Provençal rooms, a location at the heart of Vieux Nice, and a diminutive flower-decked roof terrace with views of the Colline du Château and surrounding rooftops.

Hôtel Armenonville

HOTEL €€

(0204 93 96 86 00; www.hotel-armenonville.com; 20 av des Fleurs; d €86-105; @☎🚶) Tucked away at the back of an alleyway and shielded by its large garden, this grand early-20th-century mansion has sober rooms, three of them (rooms 12, 13 and 14) with a huge terrace overlooking the garden. Some of the rooms have air-con but there is no elevator.

Hôtel Hi

HOTEL €€€

(0204 97 07 26 26; www.hi-hotel.net; 3 av des Fleurs; s/d from €249/269; ☎@☎🚶) Think of what the most techno-funk, whacky, futuristic designer place would look like in your wildest dreams – now quadruple that, and you have Hôtel Hi. Designed by Matali Crasset, a student of Philippe Starck, Hi won't be for everyone and some of the designs already look tired, but the hotel is big in sustainability and the rooftop pool, spa and funky bar are good perks. Tariffs include an organic buffet breakfast. The hotel has an elevator.

Also recommended:

Hôtel Negresco

HOTEL €€€

(0204 93 16 64 00; www.hotel-negresco-nice.com; 37 promenade des Anglais; d from €400; ☎@) Nice's most extravagant palace is indulging in a two-year renovation project to look its best for its centenary in 2012. If you don't stay there, make sure you still pop in to have a look at the magnificent halls.

Belle Meunière

HOSTEL €

(0204 93 88 66 15; www.bellemeuniere.com; 21 av Durante; dm €18-24, d €55-62; ☎🚶) Great for unfussy families, but the street outside is loud and there's only single-pane glass.

Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Camélias

HOSTEL €

(0204 93 62 15 54; www.fuaj.org, in French; 3 rue Spitaleri; dm incl breakfast & sheets €23; @☎) This hostel has clean, spacious dorms, a bar, a self-catering kitchen and a laundry. There is a midday lockout (11am to 3pm) but no night curfew.

Exedra

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(0204 97 03 89 89; www.boscolohotels.com; 12 av Victor Hugo; d €240-460; @) Totally gutted in 2008, the belle époque shell now houses one of Nice's most aggressively sexy hotels. Alas, service is weak for this price.



Eating

Restaurants in Vieux Nice are a mixed bag of tourist traps and genuine good finds. Follow your instincts, or our recommendations.

Luc Salsedo

MODERN FRENCH €€€

(☎04 93 82 24 12; www.restaurant-salsedo.com, in French; 14 rue Maccarani; lunch/dinner menu €26/44, mains €26; ☺lunch Fri & Sun-Tue, dinner Thu-Tue, dinner only Jul-Aug; ☎) The cuisine of Salsedo, a young chef who's built a fine reputation, is local and seasonal. His menu (which, unusually, caters well for vegetarians) changes every 10 days to reflect the mood of the market stalls. The food is delightful and served without pomp on plates, rustic boards or authentic cast-iron pots. The wine list is another hit, with an all-French cast from white to red and rosé.

Luna Rossa

ITALIAN €€

(☎04 93 85 55 66; www.lunalarossa.com; 3 rue Chauvain; mains €15-25; ☺lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat) Luna Rossa is like your dream Mediterranean dinner come true: fresh pasta, exquisitely cooked seafood (pan-fried John Dory, grilled sea bass, sautéed king prawns), sun-kissed vegetables (artichoke hearts, sun-dried tomatoes, asparagus tips) and divine meats (beef carpaccio with truffle and parmesan shavings). Wash it down with one of the excellent bottles of red or rosé from the cellar.

La Merenda

NIÇOIS CUISINE €€

(4 rue Raoul Bosio; mains €12-15; ☺Mon-Fri) Closed at weekends, with no phone number or credit card machine, La Merenda is one of a kind. This tiny restaurant serves some of the most unusual fare in town: stockfish (dried cod soaked in running water for a few days and then simmered with onions, tomatoes, garlic, olives and potatoes) is the house speciality, as is tripe. La Merenda also serves Bellet wines, a rare local vintage.

La Petite Maison

NIÇOIS CUISINE €€€

(☎04 93 92 59 59; www.lapetitemaison-nice.com; 11 rue St-François de Paule; mains €20-40; ☺Mon-Sat) Nice's hottest table draws celebs and politicians for its happening scene and elegantly executed Niçois specialities. We love the drama of the noisy, high-ceilinged room, aglow with flickering candlelight, and the contemporary spins of local classics, but waiters putter (unless you're famous), portions run small and tables are packed together. Still, it's tops for a splashy night out. Reservations essential.

Fenocchio

ICE CREAM €

(2 place Rossetti; ice cream from €2; ☺9am-midnight, closed Nov-Jan) The best place to beat Nice's heat is this *glacier*, serving 50 flavours of ice cream – eschew predictable favourites and indulge in a new taste sensation: black olive, tomato-basil, rhubarb, avocado, rosemary, *calisson* (almond biscuit frosted with icing sugar), lavender, ginger or liquorice.

Chez René Socca

BISTRO €

(2 rue Miralhéti; dishes from €2; ☺9am-9pm Tue-Sun, closed Nov) Forget about presentation and manners; here, it's all about taste. Grab a portion of *socca* (chickpea-flour pancake) or a plate of *petits farcis* (stuffed vegetables) and head across the street to the bar for a *grand pointu* (glass) of red, white or rosé.

Zucca Magica

VEGETARIAN €€

(☎04 93 56 25 27; www.lazuccamagica.com; 4bis quai Papacino; menus €30; ☺Tue-Sat; ☎) The 'Magic Pumpkin' is a rare thing in France: a vegetarian restaurant that nonvegetarians actually like to go to. Bring an appetite: *menus* comprise four set dishes (five for dinner) plus dessert, depending on what green giant and chef Marco Folicaldi finds at the markets.

Le Safari

NIÇOIS CUISINE €€

(☎04 93 80 18 44; restaurantsafari.fr; 1 cours Saleya; mains €12-27; ☺noon-11.30pm) The only restaurant on touristy Cours Saleya that merits your attention, Le Safari serves Niçois specialities – *daube de boeuf* (beef stew), *petite friture* (fried small fish) and *petits farcis* – on a bustling heated terrace and a more romantic (smoke-free) wood-beamed dining room lined with jars of olives.

La Table Alziari

NIÇOIS CUISINE €€

(☎04 93 80 34 03; 4 rue François Zanin; mains €9-15; ☺Tue-Sat) Run by the grandson of the famous Alziari olive oil family, this citrus-coloured restaurant off the busy rue Paolière is not here to brag about anything. The day's menu is chalked on a blackboard, with local specialities such as *morue à la niçoise* (cod served with potatoes, olives and a tomato sauce) or grilled goat's cheese washed down with regional wines.

Sarao

SPANISH €€

(☎04 92 00 50 90; www.sarao-restaurant.com; 7 promenade des Anglais; 2-/3-course menu €14/18; ☺8am-11pm) Good-value cooking blending Spanish and French, with live

bossa nova on Saturday nights and brunch on Sunday. Many wines under €30.

Pasta Basta

ITALIAN €

(☎04 93 80 03 57; 18 rue de la Préfecture; 3-course menu €14.50, mains €13) Choose a pasta, pick a sauce and – hey presto! – a plate of amazing pasta made on the premises. Best enjoyed on the street-side terrace.

Acchiardo

BISTRO €

(☎04 93 85 51 16; 38 rue Droite; mains €14-20; ☺Mon-Fri) Going strong since 1927, locals flock to Acchiardo for the *plat du jour* (daily special), a glass of wine and a load of gossip served straight up on the counter.

Café de Turin

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 93 62 29 52; www.cafedeturin.fr; 5 place Garibaldi; seafood platters from €20; ☺8am-10pm) Nice's best oysters and *plateaux de fruits de mer* (cold seafood platters).

Delhi Belhi

INDIAN €€

(☎04 93 92 51 87; www.delhibelhi.com; 22 rue de la Barillerie; mains €13, menus from €22; ☺dinner; 🍷) An excellent Indian restaurant, ideal if you've overdosed on Mediterranean flavours.

Self-Catering

Pack the ultimate picnic hamper from cours Saleya's magnificent **fruit and vegetable market** (☺6am-1.30pm Tue-Sun), where long trestle tables groan with shiny fruit and veg, pastries, *fruits confits* (glazed or candied fruits such as figs, ginger, pears etc) and more.

Supermarkets and minimarkets abound:

Monoprix av Jean Médecin (42 av Jean Médecin; ☺8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat); place Garibaldi (place Garibaldi; ☺8.30am-8.45pm Mon-Sat).



Drinking

Vieux Nice's little streets runneth over with local bars and cafés: from a morning

espresso to a lunchtime *pastis* (the tippie of choice in the south of France), a chilled evening beer or a midnight cocktail, the choice is yours.

Les Distilleries Idéales

CAFÉ

(24 rue de la Préfecture; ☺9am-12.30am) Whether you're after an espresso on your way to cours Saleya or a sundowner, the atmosphere in this brilliant bistro is infectious: you're bound to leave with a skip in your step.

Ma Nolan's

PUB

(www.ma-nolans.com; 2 rue St-François de Paule; ☺noon-2am Mon-Fri, 11pm-2am Sat & Sun) Irish pub Ma Nolan's is a backpacker favourite with its Monday-night pub quiz, televised sport, nightly live music and full-English brekkie.

Le Six

GAY BAR

(www.le6.fr; 6 rue Raoul Bosio; ☺Tue-Sun 10pm-4.30am) Primped and pretty A-gays crowd shoulder to shoulder at Nice's compact, perennially popular 'mo bar. The thing to do: climb the ladder to the mezzanine (watch your head!).

La Civette du Cours

CAFÉ

(1 cours Saleya; ☺8am-1am) Nurse a hangover with a cappuccino in the morning sun, or join the locals for a pre-lunch *pastis* at this cheerful café.

Happy Bar

BAR

(www.hi-hotel.net; 3 av des Fleurs; ☺7pm-midnight Tue-Sat) This once-trendy bar now looks a touch dated, but the garden remains a fun spot for a drink; DJs spin monthly.

Chez Wayne's

BAR

(www.waynes.fr; 15 rue de la Préfecture; ☺2.30pm-12.30am) Raucous watering hole Chez Wayne's also has live bands every night.



Entertainment

The tourist office has info on Nice's cultural activities listed in its free publications –

FAST FOOD: PAN BAGNAT

When locals want a quick bite, they hunt down a *pan bagnat* – loosely translated as sopped bread – the local version of a tuna sandwich, made with crusty bread, chunks of cold tuna, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, radish and egg, all drizzled with local olive oil. You'll see versions all over town, but the best come from the port-side snack-bar **La Gratta** (2 bd Franck Pilatte; sandwiches €4.50; ☺lunch), which uses excellent ingredients including tender-crustied fresh bread and fruity green olive oil. Find a spot along the port where you can dangle your feet over the quai, and watch masts bob in the harbour while you drip olive oil down your chin.

Nice Rendez-vous (monthly) and *Côte d'Azur en Fêtes* (quarterly) – or consult the weekly *Semaine des Spectacles* (€1), available from newsstands on Wednesday. All are in French. Buy event tickets at **Fnac** (44 av Jean Médecin).

Cinemas

Catch nondubbed flicks at **Cinéma Nouveau Mercury** (16 place Garibaldi) and **Cinéma Rialto** (4 rue de Rivoli).

Live Music

Le Bar des Oiseaux CABARET
(www.bardesoiseaux.com, in French; 5 rue St-Vincent; ☺to midnight weekdays, to 1am or 2am Fri & Sat) Artists dig this bohemian bar (and adjoining theatre) for live jazz, *chanson française* (French songs) and cabaret nights. Cover costs around €5 when there's entertainment; you can also dine here (*menus* around €20; lunch Monday to Saturday, dinner Tuesday to Saturday).

La Havane

LATINO
(32 rue de France; ☺2pm-2.30am) For sultry Latin vibes, this bar-restaurant alternates live salsa and Latino jazz with *merengue* and *bachata* Tuesday to Saturday nights. Musicians play three sets of 45 minutes, starting at 9.30pm.

Opéra de Nice

OPERA
(www.opera-nice.org; 4-6 rue St-François de Paule; ☺box office 9am-5.45pm Tue-Sat, to 7.45pm Fri, closed mid-Jun-Sep) The vintage 1885 grande dame hosts operas, ballets and orchestral concerts. Tickets cost €7 to €85.

Nightclubs

TOP CHOICE Le Smarties LOUNGE BAR
(http://nicesmarties.free.fr; 10 rue Defly; ☺6pm-2am Tue-Sat) We love Smarties' sexy '70s swirly orange style, which draws a hot-looking straight-gay crowd. On weekends, the tiny dance floor fills when DJs spin deep house, electro, techno and occasionally disco; weekdays are mellower. Free buffet with happy hour (nightly 6pm to 9pm).

High Club/Studio 47

NIGHTCLUB
(www.highclub.fr, in French; 45 Promenade des Anglais; ☺Fri-Sun 11.30pm-5am) The High Club's mega sound system draws the occasional big-name DJ and throngs of 20-somethings every weekend. Over-30s hang out in the adjoining Studio 47, a secondary bar in the room behind the vast dance floor. Doormen are fussy; look sharp or don't get in. Every second Sunday is gay night.

Bliss Bar

LOUNGE BAR
(www.myspace.com/blissbar06; cnr rue de l'Abbaye & rue Colonna d'Istria; ☺Wed-Sat 10pm-2am) Trendy Bliss is a favourite of happening 20-somethings. If you can't decide whether to wait, peer inside the windows to get a taste of who's inside. You'll know right away if it's a yes or no.

Les Trois Diables

NIGHTCLUB
(2 cours Saleya; ☺5pm-2.15am) Music is a mix of trip-hop, house and electro at this small local club. Thursday is student night (show your ID); Wednesday is karaoke.

Le Klub

GAY NIGHTCLUB
(www.leklub.net; 6 rue Halévy; ☺Thurs-Sun 11.30pm-5am) Nice's hit-or-miss gay club occupies two floors – dance floor down, bar up. Friday through Sunday, expect a €10 to €15 cover, one drink included.



Shopping

Designer names abound in the fashionable, part-pedestrian area defined by rue Paradis, av de Suède, rue Alphonse Karr and rue du Maréchal Joffre (all west of av Jean Médecin).

Cours Saleya markets

MARKETS
(☺6am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) Split between its beautiful **flower market** and rightly famous **food market**. On Mondays from 6am to 6pm, flowers and food make way for an **antiques market**.

Cave de la Tour

WINE
(3 rue de la Tour) The best-value place for tasting and buying wine.

Cat's Whiskers (30 rue Lamartine) BOOKSHOP
Linda and her four-legged assistant Vodka will help you pick new and second-hand English-language books.

Maison de la Presse

BOOKSHOP
(1 place Masséna)
Maps and guides, plus books and magazines in English.

Nice Étoile

SHOPPING MALL
(av Jean Médecin) This enormous shopping mall spans a city block and hosts the usual fashion franchises.



Information

Barclays Bank (2 rue Alphonse Karr) Has a change counter.

Police station (☎04 92 17 22 22, Foreign Tourist Department 04 92 17 20 31; 1 av Maréchal Foch)





1. St-Paul de Vence (p837)

Cobblestoned St-Paul de Vence has been home to many 20th-century artists, including Chagall.

2. Èze (p857)

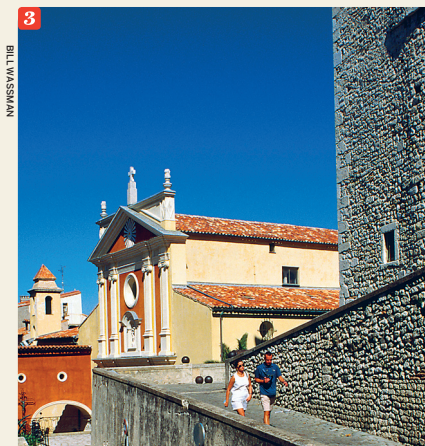
Medieval Èze sits atop a 427m-high peak, with magnificent views across the Mediterranean.

3. Musée Picasso, Antibes (p835)

In 1946, Picasso made his studio in the Château Grimaldi. Today it houses a museum of his work.

4. Beach at Cannes (p839)

Cannes has glitz and glamour year-round, not only during its famous film festival.



Post office Main post office (23 av Thiers); Vieux Nice (2 rue Louis Gassin)

Tourist office Airport tourist information desk (Terminal 1; ☎8am-9pm, closed Sun Oct-May); main tourist office (www.nicetourisme.com); 5 promenade des Anglais; ☎8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun); train station (av Thiers; ☎8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun)

Travellex (13 av Thiers; ☎8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) Opposite the station.

i Getting There & Away

A second tram line is planned that will connect Nice's centre with the airport. The bus station is also slated to be demolished and rebuilt at another location. Check with the tourist office or call ☎08 00 06 01 06 for updates.

Air

Aéroport International Nice-Côte d'Azur (www.nice.aeroport.fr) lies 6km west of the city centre. A free **shuttle** (☎every 10min 4.30am-midnight) connects its two terminals. Carriers include low-cost **BMIBaby** (www.bmibaby.com) and **EasyJet** (www.easyjet.com).

Helicopter Monaco (www.helicoptermonaco.com) helicopters connect Nice airport and Monaco in seven minutes; one-way adult/child fares cost €120/80.

Boat

The fastest, least-expensive ferries from France to Corsica depart from Nice (see p873). To go to the port, take Buses 9 or 10 off av Jean Médecin (stop Médecin/Pastorelli) to the Port stop. Ferry companies:

Corsica Ferries (www.corsicaferries.com; quai Lunel)

SNCM (www.sncm.fr; ferry terminal, quai du Commerce)

Bus

Ligne d'Azur (www.lignedazur.com) buses leave from the **bus station** (gare routière; 5 bd Jean Jaurès). A single €1 fare takes you anywhere in the Alpes-Maritimes *département* (with a few exceptions, such as the airport) and includes one connection, within 74 minutes. Buses run daily to Antibes (one hour), Cannes (1½ hours), Grasse (1½ hours), Menton (1½ hours), Monaco

(45 minutes), St-Paul de Vence (55 minutes) and Vence (one hour).

Eurolines (www.eurolines.com) Operates from the bus station and serves long-haul European destinations.

Train

From July to September the SNCF's Carte Isabelle (€14, available from train stations) lets you make unlimited trips in a single day (except TGV trains) from Fréjus to Ventimiglia in Italy, and from Nice to Tende.

Gare Nice Ville (av Thiers) is 1.2km north of the beach. There are frequent services to coastal towns, including Antibes (€4, 30 minutes), Cannes (€6.50, 40 minutes), Menton (€4.50, 35 minutes), Monaco (€3.40, 20 minutes) and St-Raphaël (€11, 50 minutes). Direct TGV trains link Nice with Paris' Gare de Lyon (€115, 5½ hours).

SOS Voyageurs (☎04 93 16 02 61; ☎9am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) Handles lost luggage and other problems.

i Getting Around

Regional network **Ligne d'Azur** (www.lignedazur.com; 3 place Masséna; ☎7.45am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat) operates local and intercity buses, and the tram. Fares cost €1 per trip (except to the airport), including one connection. Buy tickets from the driver or ticket machines at tram stops. An unlimited-travel day pass costs €4.

To/From the Airport

Ligne d'Azur operates two airport buses; the €4 ticket is then valid on other buses for the entire day. Route 99 departs Gare Nice Ville and goes directly to the airport every half-hour from 8am to 9pm daily. Route 98 departs from the bus station every 20 minutes (every 30 minutes on Sunday), making stops en route along the Promenade des Anglais, from 6am to 9pm.

Taxis from the airport to the city centre cost €25 to €30, depending on the time of day.

Bus

Walking or riding the tram is the best way to get around the city centre, but for anywhere beyond the station-Masséna-Vieux Nice triangle, buses are the way to go. Four night buses (N1,

RESOURCES

- » **Côte d'Azur Tourisme** (www.cotedazur-tourisme.com) Comprehensive online resource to the Riviera
- » **PACA** (www.crt-paca.fr) Umbrella site for all of Provence and the Riviera
- » **Riviera Guide** (www.guiderviviera.com) Covers the eastern Riviera
- » **Var Destination** (www.vardestination.com) Info on the Riviera's western Var region

N2, N3 and N4) run north, east and west from place Masséna every half-hour from 9.10pm until 2am.

Car, Motorcycle & Bicycle

Major car-rental companies (Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz etc) have offices at the train station. The best rates are generally via their websites; the earlier you book, the better.

To go native, go for two wheels (and be prepared for hefty safety deposits):

Elite Rent-a-Bike (www.elite-rentabike.com; 21 rue de Rivoli) Near the beach.

Holiday Bikes (www.holiday-bikes.com; 23 rue de Belgique; ☺ closed 12.30-2pm & Sun Oct-May) Rents bicycles/50cc scooters/125cc motorcycles for €14/26/57. Enquire for rates on bigger motorcycles.

Vélo Bleu (☎ 04 93 72 06 06, in English; www.velobleu.org, in French) A shared-bicycle service with over 100 stations around the city – pick up at one, return at another. One-day/week subscriptions costs €1/5, plus usage: free the first 30 minutes, €1 the next 30, then €2 per hour thereafter. You'll need a mobile phone to sign up and operate the system, which can be done in English. Beware the week-to-10-days' return time of your €200 deposit, which they charge you each time you resubscribe; it's better to subscribe once for the week than for five individual days in a row, lest you temporarily max out your credit card.

Taxi

Only out-of-towners take taxis, and drivers know it – the tourist office constantly gets complaints. Ensure your driver uses the meter and charges the correct fare, which is clearly printed on a laminated card that drivers are required to display. Find taxi stands outside the Gare Nice Ville and on av Félix Faure close to place Masséna; otherwise, call ☎ 04 93 13 78 78.

Tram

Nice's sleek new trams are ideal for getting around. Line 1 runs a V-shaped northwest-south-northeast itinerary from 4.30am to 1.30am, serving convenient areas such as the train station, old town and the Acropolis in the centre.

Antibes & Juan-les-Pins

POP 76,800

Antibes is a concentrate of Mediterranean history. The town's sea walls bear witness to a defensive past (neighbouring Nice had switched allegiance to rival Savoy). Golfe Juan staged Napoléon Bonaparte's triumphant return from exile in Elba. Picasso painted in the Château Grimaldi and F

TRAM TRIVIA

Thirteen international artists contributed to customising the trams' snazzy look, from original soundbites at each stop to local artist Ben's stop-name calligraphy and futuristic art installations along the tram's itinerary. The most visible work is *The Conversation* by Catalan artist Jaume Plensa, overhead on av Jean Jaurès near place Masséna. Most people mistake the seven glowing figures for Buddhas. In fact, they represent the earth's continents and change colours in time with each other to signify world dialogue.

Scott Fitzgerald wrote his seminal novel *Tender is the Night* based on life in Antibes.

Nowadays, Antibes sports the second biggest marina in Europe and attracts throngs of 'yachties' in search of seafaring adventures. The town itself is relatively small and low-key, however, with Cap d'Antibes being a favourite of millionaires. It's a perfect day trip from Nice or Cannes, or a lovely Riviera base if you're after something quieter than the coast's cities.

👁 Sights & Activities

Musée Picasso

ART MUSEUM

(www.antibes-juanlespins.com; Château Grimaldi, 4 rue des Cordiers, Antibes; adult/child €6/3; ☺ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) Spectacularly positioned overlooking the sea, 14th-century Château Grimaldi served as Picasso's studio from July to December 1946. The museum, which underwent substantial renovation, now houses an excellent collection of the master's paintings, lithographs, drawings and ceramics, as well as a photographic record of the artist at work.

Vieil Antibes

OLD TOWN

Vieil Antibes is a pleasant mix of food shops, boutiques and restaurants. Mornings are a good time to meander along the little alleyways, when the **marché** (market; Cours Masséna) is in full swing. Check out the views from the sea walls, from the urban sprawl of Nice to the snowy peaks of the Alps and nearby Cap d'Antibes. The area has always been a magnet for artists and celebrities; to find out more, join the **Accueil Touristique du Vieil Antibes** (☎ 04 93 34 65 65; 32 bd d'Aguillon; ☺ 10am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Sat)

on one of its two-hour guided tours (adult/child €7/free). Check for exact dates and bookings.

Cap d'Antibes

WALKING

Cap d'Antibes' 4.8km of wooded shores are the perfect setting for a walk-swim-walk-swim afternoon. Paths are well marked. The tourist office maps show itineraries.

Musée Peynet

ART MUSEUM

(www.antibes-juanlespins.com; place Nationale, Antibes; adult/child €3/free; ☺10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) More than 300 humorous pictures, cartoons and costumes by Antibes-born cartoonist Raymond Peynet, as well as brilliant temporary exhibitions.

Beaches

BEACHES

Antibes' small sandy beach, **Plage de la Gravette**, gets packed; you'll find the best beaches in **Juan-les-Pins**, including some free beaches on bd Littoral and bd Charles Guillaumont. **Plage de la Salis**, on the road between Vieil Antibes and Cap d'Antibes, has the most incredible view of the Alps.



Festivals & Events

Jazz à Juan

MUSIC FESTIVAL

(www.jazzajuan.fr) All jazz greats, from Sidney Bechet and Miles Davis to John

WORTH A TRIP

MUSÉE RENOIR

The city of Cagnes-sur-Mer is nothing to write home about. What is, however, is the exquisite **Musée Renoir** (www.cagnes-tourisme.com; Chemin des Collettes, Cagnes-sur-Mer; adult/child €4/free; ☺10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon). Le Domaine des Collettes (as the property was known) was home and studio to an arthritis-crippled Renoir (1841-1919) from 1907 until his death. He lived there with his wife and three children, and the house is wonderfully evocative.

Works on display include *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (The Women Bathers; 1892), a reworking of the 1887 original, and rooms are dotted with photographs and personal possessions. The beautiful olive and citrus groves are as much an attraction as the museum itself. Many visitors set up their own easel to paint.

Coltrane and Keith Jarrett, have played at this summer festival held in mid-July in Antibes' La Pinède park, next to the casino.



Sleeping



Hôtel La Jabotte

B&B €€

(☎04 93 61 45 89; www.jabotte.com; 13 av Max Maurey, Cap d'Antibes; s/d incl breakfast from €108/118; ☼☼) A hotel with *chambre d'hôte* (B&B) feel, La Jabotte is Antibes' hidden gem. Just 50m from the sea (and 20 minutes' walk from Vieil Antibes), its 10 Provençal rooms all look out onto an exquisite patio where breakfast is served from spring to autumn. Much of the decor is the work of Yves, whose work you'll also be able to buy.

Villa Val des Roses

BOUTIQUE B&B €€€

(☎06 85 06 06 29; www.val-des-roses.com; 6 chemin des Lauriers; d incl breakfast low/high season from €140/250; ☼☼☼☼) This beautiful 19th-century bourgeois villa with marble floors, laptop and jacuzzi bath in each room is a 20-minute stroll from the old town. But it's a mere moment from sandy Plage de la Salis and its walled garden is an oasis of peace, best enjoyed in the morning whilst tucking into the grand breakfast buffet.

Relais International de la Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎04 93 61 34 40; www.clajsud.fr; 272 bd de la Garoupe, Cap d'Antibes; dm incl breakfast & sheets €18) In the most perfect of Mediterranean locations, with sea views the envy of neighbouring millionaires, this friendly hostel is particularly popular with 'yachties' looking for their next job in Antibes' port.

Le Relais du Postillon

HOTEL €

(☎04 93 34 20 77; www.relaisdupostillon.com; 8 rue Championnet, Antibes; s/d €49/73; ☼) Housed in a 17th-century coach house, the great-value Postillon is in the heart of the old town.



Eating



Le Broc en Bouche

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 93 34 75 60; 8 rue des Palmiers, Antibes; mains €15-30; ☺closed Tue dinner & Wed) You'll melt for Flo and Fred's gourmet bistro, their *foie gras*, their *magret de canard* (duck breast) and whatever daily special they'll come up with. And if you like what you see in the fantastic bric-a-brac decor, you could be going home with it: it's all for sale.

La Taverne du Safranier

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 93 34 80 50; place Safranier, Antibes; mains €10-20, 2-course menu €25; ☺lunch Wed-

Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) Specialities at this casual side-street restaurant include mussels, *petite friture* (fried tiny fish) and *soupe de poisson* (fish soup), served on paper-topped tables surrounded by plastic picnic chairs – tops for an honest seafood dinner with zero fuss.

Le Jardin

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 93 34 64 74; www.restaurant-lejardin.fr; 5 rue Sade, Antibes; menus €19.50-33, mains €20) Le Jardin has a delightful garden for alfresco dining, the perfect setting for the restaurant's sunny cuisine. The menu changes with the seasons but is always imaginative and the dishes are beautifully presented.

Auberge Provençale

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 93 34 13 24; www.aubergeprovencale.com; 61 place Nationale, Antibes; menus €17.50-60; ☎Tue-Sat) The auberge is famed for its fabulous seafood. In winter, make sure you get a table in the Vieux Couvent; in summer, opt for the courtyard.

La Ferme au Foie Gras

SANDWICH SHOP €

(www.vente-foie-gras.net; 35 rue Aubernon, Antibes; sandwiches €3.50-8; ☎7am-7pm Tue-Sun) Now this is our idea of what a good sandwich should be like: filled with foie gras and delicious chutneys. The adjoining shop also sells excellent foie gras.

Self-catering

Marché Provençal

MARKET €

(cours Masséna, Antibes; ☎closed Mon Sep-May) The morning market is perfect for picking up picnic supplies.



Drinking & Entertainment

Calade en Provence

ABSINTHE BAR

(25 cours Masséna, Antibes; ☎6pm-2am) Flirt with the green fairy at this dedicated absinthe bar, complete with original 1860 zinc bar, round tables and accessories (four-tapped water fountain, sugar cubes etc). Make sure you strike up conversation with the hugely knowledgeable staff.

Pearl La Siesta

NIGHTCLUB

(rte du Bord de Mer, Antibes; cover €15-20; ☎7pm-5am Thu-Sat) This legendary establishment is famous up and down the coast for its beachside nightclub (Le Pearl) and all-night dancing under the stars. Open from early June to mid-September only, you can still party at the indoor bar-lounge (Le Flamingo) during the rest of the year.

i Information

Eurochange (4 rue Georges Clémenceau, Antibes; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Post office (2 av Paul Doumer, Antibes)

Tourist office (www.antibesjuanlespins.com; ☎9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun) Antibes (11 place du Général de Gaulle); Juan-les-Pins (55 bd Charles Guillaumont)

Workstation Cyber Café (1 av St-Roch, Antibes; per hr €4.50; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun)

i Getting There & Away

Antibes is an easy day trip by train from Nice (€4, 30 minutes) or Cannes (€2.60, 15 minutes).

The **bus station** (gare routière, place Guynemer) has services to surrounding towns, including Biot; buses also depart next to the tourist office.

Biot

POP 9200

From the 16th to 18th centuries, the little hillside village of Biot was famous across the Med for the exceptional quality of its olive-oil jars. Very little remains of that pottery hegemony, but Biot is now famous for another much prettier, but far less pragmatic, art form: bubbled glass.

The famous bubbles are produced by rolling molten glass in baking soda to create a chemical reaction, then trapping the bubbles with a second layer of glass; the latest frosted look uses acid dips.

You can watch work under way at the factory **La Verrerie de Biot** (Glassworks of Biot; www.verrieriebiot.com; Chemin des Combes; admission free, 45min guided tour in English €6; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sun), at the foot of the village.

Biot's **tourist office** (☎04 93 65 78 00; www.biot.fr; 46 rue St-Sébastien; ☎9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun) is located in the village itself, another hilltop warren full of century-old buildings.

Bus 10 (€1, 10 minutes) links the village and the Biot train station half-hourly. In summer, a free shuttle takes in the train station, the *verrerie* and the village.

St-Paul de Vence & Around

POP 3400

What's distinguished the medieval hilltop village of St-Paul de Vence from every other medieval hilltop village around is its

phenomenal art legacy. St-Paul attracted many seminal 20th-century artists who lived and worked in the village, such as Russian painter Marc Chagall, who is now buried in St-Paul's interdenominational cemetery.

St-Paul de Vence's cobblestone streets and 16th-century fortifications, dramatically floodlit at night, are an attraction in their own right, one that draws 2.5 million visitors a year.

Sights

Fondation Maeght

GALLERY

(www.fondation-maeght.com; 623 chemin des Gardettes, St-Paul de Vence; adult/child €14/9; ☎10am-7pm) Browsing the gallery-lined village streets (64 galleries in total!) is a fine entrée for art lovers, but the pièce de résistance is this private gallery, about 500m from the old village. It was designed by architect Josep Luis Sert in conjunction with contemporary artists such as Chagall, who created an exterior mosaic. With an outdoor sculpture 'labyrinth' by Spanish surrealist Joan Miró, interspersed with reflecting pools and mosaics, it was inaugurated in 1964. Its extraordinary permanent collection of 40,000 works is exhibited on a rotating basis.

Chapelle du Rosaire

CHAPEL

(Rosary Chapel; www.vence.fr/the-rosaie-chapel.html; 466 av Henri Matisse, Vence; admission €3; ☎2-5.30pm Mon, Wed & Sat, 10-11.30am & 2-5.30pm Tue & Thu, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec) While living in Vence, Matisse's friendship



GOING TO FONDATION MAEGHT

Most tourists take the main road to go to the Fondation, but Chemin Ste-Claire is much more inspirational. It was Chagall's route to the village, and along the way you'll pass three chapels, a convent and two Chagall reproductions, placed roughly on the spot where he created the originals. The views en route are truly magnificent, and it's not as hilly as the main road.

with his former model-turned-Dominican Sister Jacques-Marie inspired him to design what he called his masterwork, completed when he was 81. The light from the chapel's stained-glass windows is particularly beautiful in the morning. The artistic blueprints for the chapel, including 42 drawings, 21 paper cuttings, two stained-glass windows, two ceramic pieces and a sculpture, are on display in the Musée Matisse in Nice.



Sleeping & Eating

La Colombe d'Or

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 93 32 80 02; www.la-colombe-dor.com; St-Paul de Vence; r from €250-430, lunch mains €20-60, dinner mains €60-70; ☎closed Nov-Christmas; 🍷🍷) This world-famous inn could double as the Fondation Maeght's annexe: La Colombe d'Or (located outside the walls, at the entrance of the village) was the party HQ of many 20th-century artists (Chagall, Braque, Matisse, Picasso etc) who often paid for their meals in kind, resulting in an incredible private art collection. Don't expect to get a table (or a room) unless you book well in advance, but it will be worth the wait: every room houses unique art and vintage furniture, as do the dining room and garden.

DON'T MISS

LES ARCADES

The enchanting hotel-restaurant **Les Arcades** (☎04 93 65 01 04; www.hotel-restaurant-les-arcades.com, in French; 16 place des Arcades, Biot; d €55-100, menus €28-32; ☎closed Mon & dinner Sun) has become an institution in Biot: the 15th-century building is now home to a prestigious modern art collection, the result of 50 years of friendship between André and Mimi Brothier (the owners) and the many artists living in Biot in the postwar years, such as César, Novaro, Vasarely and Léger. The more-expensive rooms, with their unique works of art, heavy oak furniture, monumental fireplaces and palatial bathrooms, are worth every penny.



Information

Tourist office (☎04 93 32 86 95; www.saint-pauldevence.com; 2 rue Grande; ☎10am-7pm)



Getting There & Away

From Nice, the frequent bus 400 stops in St-Paul de Vence (€1, 55 minutes) and Vence (€1, one hour).

Cannes

POP 71,800

Most people have heard of Cannes and its eponymous film festival. The latter only lasts for two weeks in May, but the buzz and glitz are there year-round – unlike neighbouring St-Tropez, which shuts down in winter – mostly thanks to regular visits from celebrities enjoying the creature comforts of *bd de la Croisette's* palaces.

However, what people may not know is that, for all its glamour, Cannes retains a genuine small-town feel: just like anywhere in the south, you'll witness pensioners hotly debating who won the last round of *pétanque* (a game not unlike lawn bowls) under the main square's plane trees (in this case, at Sq Lord Brougham). You'll also get a chance to escape to the unspoilt Îles de Lérins, and to become familiar with more than 2000 years of history – from Ligurian fishing communities in 200 BC to one of Europe's oldest religious communities (5th century AD), to the enigmatic Man in the Iron Mask and a stardom born out of anti-fascist efforts.

Sights & Activities

CANNES

Le Suquet

OLD TOWN

Predating the glitz and glam of the town's festival days, Cannes' historic quarter has retained a quaint village feel with its steep, meandering alleyways. There are wonderful views of the Baie de Cannes from the top of the hill, and the fascinating **Musée de la Castre** (place de la Castre; adult/child €3.20/free; ☀10am-7pm, closed Mon Sep-Jun). The museum has beautifully presented ethnographic collections.

Palais des Festivals

LANDMARK

(Festival Palace; *bd de la Croisette*) At the western end of La Croisette, this concrete bunker is the unlikely host of the world's most glamorous film festival. The tourist office runs 1½-hour **guided tours** (adult/child €3/free; ☀2.30pm), where as well as climbing the red carpet you'll walk down the auditorium, tread the stage and hear many anecdotes about the festival. The tours take place several times a month, except in May. Check with the tourist office for dates and book, as the tours are extremely popular.

STARRING AT CANNES

For 12 days in May, Cannes becomes the centre of the cinematic universe. Over 30,000 producers, distributors, directors, publicists, stars and hangers-on descend on Cannes each year to buy, sell or promote more than 2000 films.

At the centre of the whirlwind is the surprisingly ugly **Palais des Festivals et des Congrès** (Festival Palace; dubbed 'the bunker' by locals), where the official selection is screened. Celebrities usually get their big moment climbing its stairs in an electric storm of flashes (for your own red-carpet moment, said carpet is there most of the year).

The first Cannes Film Festival, on 1 September 1939, was organised as a response to Mussolini's fascist propaganda film festival in Venice. Hitler's invasion of Poland abruptly halted the festival but it restarted in 1946. Over the years the festival split into 'in competition' and 'out of competition' selections. The ultimate prize for 'in competition' films is the prestigious *Palme d'Or*, awarded by the jury and its president to the film that best 'serves the evolution of cinematic art'. Notable winners include Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), documentary-maker Michael Moore's anti-Bush-administration polemic *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and 2008 winner *The Class* by Laurent Cantet, a chronicle of life in a tough Paris school.

Tickets to the festival are generally restricted to film-industry high fliers, but you may get free tickets to selected individual films, usually after their first screening. Invitations must be picked up on the day at **Espace Cannes Cinéphiles** (La Pâtisserie; ☀9am-5.30pm) and are limited. Alternatively, take a tour of the Palais des Festivals to find out what goes on behind and on the scene. For the film-festival programme, consult the official website: www.festival-cannes.com.



Beaches

BEACHES

The central, sandy beaches along bd de la Croisette are sectioned off for hotel patrons. Many accept day guests: rates range from €19 per day for a mattress and yellow-and-white parasol on **Plage du Gray d'Albion** (☉10am-5pm Mar-Oct) – it has a waterskiing school – to €51 for the pearl-white lounges on the pier of the super-stylish **Z Plage** (☉9.30am-6pm May-Sep), the beach of Hôtel Martinez.

A microscopic strip of sand near the Palais des Festivals is free, but you'll find better free sand on **Plages du Midi** and **Plages de la Bocca**, west from the Vieux Port along bd Jean Hibert and bd du Midi.

ÎLES DE LÉRINS

Although just 20 minutes away by boat, the tranquil Îles de Lérins feel far from the madding crowd.

The closest of these two tiny islands is the 3.25km by 1km **Île Ste-Marguerite**, where the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated during the late 17th century. Its shores are an endless succession of perfect castaway beaches and fishing spots, and its eucalyptus and pine forest makes for a heavenly refuge from the Riviera heat.

As you get off the boat, a map indicates a handful of rustic restaurants as well as

trails and paths across the island. It also directs you to Fort Royal, built in the 17th century, and now harbouring the **Musée de la Mer** (Museum of the Sea; adult/child €3.20/free; ☉10am-5.45pm). The door to the left as you enter leads to the old state prisons, built under Louis XIV. Exhibits interpret the fort's history, with displays on shipwrecks found off the island's coast.

Smaller still, at just 1.5km long by 400m wide, **Île St-Honorat** has been a monastery since the 5th century. Its Cistercian monks welcome visitors all year-round: you can visit the church and small chapels scattered around the island and stroll among the vineyards and forests. Camping and cycling are forbidden. The monks run a restaurant, **La Tonnelle** (☎04 92 99 18 07; mains €25; ☉lunch), which has lovely views of the sea and serves wine from the abbey's own vineyards (bottles are expensive but glasses are available). It's also a stellar spot for afternoon tea.

Boats for the islands leave Cannes from quai des Îles (along from quai Max Laubeuf) on the western side of the harbour. **Riviera Lines** (www.riviera-lines.com) runs ferries to Île Ste-Marguerite (return adult/child €11.50/6), while **Compagnie Planaria** (www.cannes-ilesdelerins.com) operates boats to Île St-Honorat (return adult/child €12/6).

Cannes

📍 Top Sights

- Palais des Festivals et des Congrès..... D3

📍 Sights

- 1 Musée de la Castre..... B3

Activities, Courses & Tours

- 2 Espace Cannes Cinéphiles..... D2
3 Plage du Gray d'Albion..... E3

🛏 Sleeping

- 4 Hôtel 7e Art..... D1
5 Hôtel Alnéa..... D1
6 Hôtel des Allées..... C2
7 Hôtel des Orangers..... A2
8 Hôtel Le Florian..... F2
9 Hôtel Le Mistral..... E2
10 Hôtel Le Romanesque..... G2
11 Hôtel Majestic Barrière..... E2
12 Hôtel Splendid..... D2
13 La Villa Tosca..... E1

🍴 Eating

- 14 Auberge Provençale..... B2
15 Aux Bons Enfants..... B2
16 Carrefour..... D1
17 Coquillages Brun..... C2
18 Le Riad..... G2
19 Mantel..... B2
20 Marché Forville..... B2
21 Monoprix..... E1
22 Park 45..... G3
23 PhilCat..... C2
24 Volupté..... F1

🍷 Drinking

- 25 Le Sun 7..... F2
26 Zanzibar..... D2

🎭 Entertainment

- 27 Da Da Da Club..... F2
28 For You..... F2
29 Le Night..... G1
30 Le Palais..... E3

Tours

Trans Côte d'Azur

BOAT TOUR

(☎04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Max Laubeuf) The most serene way to see the coast. There are day trips to the stunning red cliffs of the Massif de l'Estérel (adult/child €25/15), St-Tropez (adult/child €41/28) and Monaco (adult/child €46/28).

Festivals & Events

Festival de Cannes

FILM FESTIVAL

You won't get in, but it's fun because you see all the celebs walking around. And unlike the Oscars, you can get close to the red carpet without tickets. Held in May.

Les Plages Électroniques

DANCE FESTIVAL

(www.plages-electroniques.com; €5; ☀7.30pm-12.30am) DJs spin on the sand at the Plage du Palais des Festivals during this relaxed festival. Anyone is welcome, just come with beach wear. Held July to August.

Festival Pantiero

MUSIC FESTIVAL

(www.festivalpantiero.com; €20) Electronic music festival on the rooftop terrace of the Palais des Festivals; very cool. Mid-August.

Festival d'Art Pyrotechnique

FIREWORKS

(www.festival-pyrotechnique-cannes.com) Around 200,000 people cram onto the Croisette every summer to admire the outstanding fireworks display over the Bay of Cannes. Magical. Held on six nights from July to August.

TOP BEACHES

» **Plage de Pampelonne, St Tropez** (p849) Sea, sand and celebrity.

» **Z Plage, Cannes** (p841) For glamour and creature comforts, nothing beats the beach of Hôtel Martinez.

» **Plage de Gigaro, La Croix-Valmer** (p852) Not too big, along wooded shores. Beautiful.

» **Calanques, Massif de l'Estérel** (p846) Take your pick from the dozen coves with crystal-clear waters.

» **Île de Port-Cros** (p853) Most beaches on this beautiful island will make you feel like a castaway.

Sleeping

Hotel prices in Cannes fluctuate wildly according to the season, and soar during the film festival when you'll need to book months in advance. Many places only accept 12-day bookings during this time. There is no hostel in Cannes.

Hôtel 7e Art

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €

(☎04 93 68 66 66; www.7arthotel.com; 23 rue Maréchal Joffre; s €68, d €60-98; 🏠🚶🚰) Hôtel 7e Art opened in 2010, putting boutique style within reach of budgeters. The owners schooled in Switzerland and got the basics right, with great beds, sparkling-clean baths and excellent soundproofing. The snappy design of putty-coloured walls, padded headboards and pop art far exceeds what you'd expect at this price.

Hôtel Le Mistral

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 39 91 46; www.mistral-hotel.com; 13 rue des Belges; d from €89; 🏠🚶🚰) This small hotel wins the Palme d'Or for best value in town: rooms are decked out in flattering red and plum tones, bathrooms feature lovely designer fittings, there are sea views from the top floor and the hotel is a mere 50m from La Croisette. No elevator.

Hotel Le Romanesque

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 68 04 20; www.hotelleromanesque.com; 10 rue Batéguier; r €90-150; 🏠🚶🚰) Every room is individually decorated at this eight-room boutique charmer in the heart of the Carré d'Or nightlife district (book a back room if you're a light sleeper). Favourite rooms include Charlotte, with its sun-drenched bath; and Elizabeth, the former maid's quarters, with low, sloping beamed ceilings. Gay-friendly. Great service.

La Villa Tosca

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 38 34 40; www.villa-tosca.com; 11 rue Hoche; s/d €80/100; 🏠🚶🚰) This elegant bourgeois townhouse is a great choice in the heart of Cannes' shopping area. Rue Hoche is semipeDESTRIANISED so you won't be bothered by the noise. Rooms, a palette of beige and brown, are comfortable and those with balcony are perfect for a spot of people watching. The hotel has a lift.

Hôtel Alnéa

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 68 77 77; www.hotel-alnea.com; 20 rue Jean de Riouffe; s/d €68/88; 🏠🚶🚰) You'll be won over by this wonderfully friendly place. A breath of fresh air in a town of stars, Noémi and Cédric have put their heart and soul into their hotel, with bright, colourful

rooms, original paintings and numerous little details such as the afternoon coffee break, the self-service minibar and the bike or *boules* (to play *pétanque*) loans. No elevator.

Hôtel Splendid

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 97 06 22 22; www.splendid-hotel-cannes.com; 4-6 rue Félix Faure; s/d from €160/190; ☼) This elaborate 1871 building has everything it takes to rival the nearby palaces: beautifully decorated rooms, fabulous location, stunning views. But what the owners have also added is a touch of pragmatism: 15 of the 62 rooms are equipped with kitchenettes, your chance to make the very best of those balconies and sea views! The hotel is equipped with an elevator.

Hôtel Majestic Barrière

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 92 98 77 00; www.lucienbarriere.com; 10 bd de la Croisette; r from €300; ☼☼☼☼) Cannes' most magnificent luxury hotel reopened in 2010, following an €80 million renovation. This is where the stars stay during the film festival. Top choice for a devil-may-care weekend.

Hôtel 3.14

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 92 99 72 00; www.3-14hotel.com; 5 rue François Einesy; d from €200; ☼☼☼) The themed 'world' decoration, profusion of velvet and low lighting are all starting to look a little tired. But the Zen spa, vertigo-inducing rooftop jacuzzi and weeknight DJ parties still draw many of Cannes' beautiful people. Rue François Einesy runs off bd de la Croisette, east of Park 45 restaurant.

Also recommended:

Hôtel des Orangers

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 39 99 92; www.hotel-orangers.com; 1 rue des Orangers; s/d €90/100; ☼☼☼) With a Provençal decor, Les Orangers is ideally located for the restaurants galore on rue du Suquet. Has an elevator.

Hôtel Martinez

LUXURY HOTEL €€€

(☎04 92 98 73 00; www.hotel-martinez.com; 73 bd de la Croisette; d from €270; ☼☼☼☼) Live the high life in fabulous art deco style.

Parc Bellevue

CAMPGROUND €

(☎04 93 47 28 97; www.parcbellevue.com; 67 av Maurice Chevalier, Cannes-la-Bocca; 2 adults, tent & car €20; ☼Apr-Sep; ☼) About 5.5km west of the city, the closest campsite to Cannes, with facilities galore.

Hôtel Le Florian

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 39 24 82; www.hotel-leflorian.com; 8 rue Commandant André; s/d from €66/74; ☼☼) Clean, great location and affable owners.

Hôtel des Allées

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 39 53 90; www.hotel-des-alles.com; 6 rue Émile Négren; s/d €55/80; ☼☼☼) A spotless, Swiss family-run establishment located on a vibrant pedestrian street.

Eating

Generally, you'll find the least expensive restaurants on and around rue du Marché Forville. Hipper and pricier establishments can be found in Le Suquet and in the Carré d'Or (the streets between La Croisette and rue d'Antibes). Many restaurants have tables on the street. Square Lord Brougham, next to the Vieux Port, is a great place for a picnic.

Mantel

MODERN EUROPEAN €€

(☎04 93 39 13 10; www.restaurantmantel.com; 22 rue St-Antoine; lunch/dinner menus €25/28; ☼closed Wed & lunch Tue & Thu) The Italian maître d' will make you feel like a million dollars and you'll melt for Noël Mantel's divine cuisine and great-value prices. Best of all, you get not one but two desserts with your menu (oh, the panna cotta...). Never mind the Croisette's palaces, you'll definitely have a regal night at Mantel.

Coquillages Brun

SEAFOOD €€

(☎04 93 39 21 87; www.astouxbrun.com; 27 rue Félix Faure; menus from €28; ☼noon-1am) Cannes' most famous seafood brasserie, this is *the* place to indulge in oysters, mussels, prawns, crayfish and other delightfully fresh shellfish with a glass of crisp white wine. The restaurant is full every night, so make sure you book.

Aux Bons Enfants

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(80 rue Meynadier; menu €23; ☼Tue-Sat) This familial little place doesn't have a phone, and there are no plans to get one any time soon: it's always full. The lucky ones who get a table (get there early or late) can feast on regional dishes made from ingredients picked up at the adjacent market.

Le Riad

MOROCCAN €€

(☎04 93 38 60 95; www.restaurant-le-riad.fr; 6 impasse Florian; mains €13-26; ☼noon-midnight Tue-Sat) At the end of an alley in the Carré d'Or nightlife district, Le Riad imports Moroccan hospitality and authentic cooking, with classics such as *tagine* (stews cooked in conical-covered earthenware), *méchoui* (spit-roasted lamb) and a real *pastilla* (pigeon pie) – rare even in Morocco. On

weekend nights a belly dancer sets a party mood. Excellent service.

Also recommended:

Auberge Provençale PROVENÇAL €€
(☎04 92 99 27 17; www.auberge-provence.com; 10 rue St-Antoine; mains €24-55) Cuisine served in sun-drenched, rustic decor at Cannes' oldest restaurant.

PhilCat SNACK BAR €
(La Pantiéro; sandwiches or salads €5; ☎8.30am-5pm) An unassuming prefab cabin which churns out freshly prepared sandwiches, salads and homemade cakes.

Volupté CAFÉ €
(www.volupte-cannes.com; 32 rue Hoche; snacks €4.50, mains €13-15; ☎9am-8pm Mon-Sat) An elegant, trendy café ideal for a sophisticated break or a light lunch.

Park 45 GASTRONOMIC €€€
(☎04 93 38 15 45; www.grand-hotel-cannes.com; 45 bd de la Croisette; menus €40-80, mains €30-36) Perfect for a lingering lunch or swank romantic dinner, Park 45 holds one Michelin star for its imaginative cooking.

Self-Catering

Marché Forville MARKET
(rue du Marché Forville; ☎mornings Tue-Sun) Where many of the city's restaurants shop and where you should get your picnic supplies.

Carrefour SUPERMARKET
(6 rue Meynadier; ☎8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

Monoprix SUPERMARKET
(9 rue Maréchal Foch; ☎8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat)



Drinking

The party bloc in town is located around the intersection of rue des Frères Pradignac and rue du Commandant André.

To mingle with the rich and famous, Cannes' hotel palaces all have drop-dead-posh bars. Mere mortals head to the following places.



Le Sun 7 COCKTAIL BAR
(5 rue du Dr Gérard Monod; ☎9pm-2.30am; ☎) The cocktail list is an arm long (literally), and it doesn't even include the 350 whiskies and many draught beers also served at this happening bar. The crowd is young on weekend nights when DJs spin their stuff, but it's much more eclectic during the week. There is no cover charge and the door policy is pretty relaxed.

For You DANCE BAR
(www.sparklingforyou.com; 6-8 rue des Frères Pradignac; ☎6pm-4am) An easy-going bar where you can shake your stuff whilst sipping on a beer or cocktail. Door policy and dress codes are relaxed.

Zanzibar GAY BAR
(www.lezanzibar.com, in French; 85 rue Félix Faure; ☎6pm-4am) Cannes' longest-running gay bar is often dead, but we dig the fabulous mahogany panelling and half-century-old sailor murals. Ideal for quiet cocktails. Ask for a postcard.

★ Entertainment

Ask the tourist office for a copy of the free monthly *Le Mois à Cannes*, which lists what's on, where.

Dress up or you won't get in, and warm up your credit card: Cannes' nightlife ain't cheap.

Le Palais NIGHTCLUB
(www.palais-club.com; Palais des Festivals, bd de la Croisette; ☎midnight-dawn Jul-Aug) This ephemeral nightclub (it's open only for 50 nights each year) has become the hottest ticket in DJ land, a combination of the most happening names in music and its spectacular setting at the heart of the Palais des Festivals. It's the VIPs' favourite spot so door policy is pretty tight: no guys without girls, only fabulous-looking people and €25 minimum (€60 on big nights).

Le Bâoli NIGHTCLUB
(☎04 93 43 03 43; www.lebaoli.com; Port Pierre Canto, bd de la Croisette; ☎8pm-6am Thu-Sat) This is Cannes' coolest, trendiest and most selective night spot. So selective in fact that your entire posse may not get in unless you're dressed to the nines. The Bâoli is part-club part-restaurant so the only way to ensure you'll get in is to book a table for dinner (mains €60) and make a night of it. Unlike the Palais it's open year-round, and in summer the two compete.

Le Night GAY CLUB
(www.nightlife06.fr; 52 rue Jean Jaurès; ☎9.30pm-5am) Cannes' happening, young gay bar hosts theme nights, from poppers parties to singing contests. Arrive around midnight.

Da Da Da Club NIGHTCLUB
(☎04 93 39 62 70; www.dadadaclub.com; 15 rue Frères Pradignac; ☎11pm-5am) DJs spin electro to house to French pop at this black-on-

black thump-thump disco, which sometimes hosts international acts like Boy George. Look sharp or don't get in.

i Information

You'll find half a dozen banks along rue d'Antibes.

Cap Cyber (12 rue 24 Août; per hr €3; ☎10am-9pm Mon-Sat) Has Qwerty keyboards and Asian language software.

Post office (22 rue Bivouac Napoléon; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Has an ATM.

Tourist office (☎04 92 99 84 22; www.cannes.travel; bd de la Croisette; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat) On the ground floor of the Palais des Festivals.

Tourist office annexe (☎04 93 99 19 77; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Next to the train station.

i Getting There & Away

BUS Regular bus services to Nice (bus 200, €1, 1½ hours), Nice airport (Bus 210, €15, 50 minutes, half-hourly from 8am to 6pm) and other destinations leave from the bus station on place Bernard Cornut Gentile.

TRAIN There's an information desk and left-luggage facility at the train station.

Destinations within easy reach include Nice (€6.50, 40 minutes), Grasse (€3.80, 30 minutes) and Marseille (€22, two hours), as well as St-Raphaël (€6.50, 25 minutes), from where you can get buses to St-Tropez and Toulon.

i Getting Around

BUS Serving Cannes and destinations up to 7km away is **Bus Azur** (www.busazur.com; place Bernard Cornut Gentile; tickets €1). Bus 8 runs along the coast to the port and Palm Beach Casino on Pointe de la Croisette.

For €0.60 per day you can hop on the electric **Élo Bus**. It has no set stops, so just flag it down as it passes. Its itinerary is marked by a blue line on the road and includes useful locations such as the bus hub at Hôtel de Ville, the Croisette, rue d'Antibes and the train station. It's free if you show a parking-lot claim ticket.

CAR, MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE There are plenty of paying car parks, including the Palais underground car park (per hour/day €2.60/20) next to the tourist office, which lends out free bicycles if you park here. Parking is free on Pointe de la Croisette.

Elite Rent-a-Bike (www.elite-rentabike.com; 32 av Maréchal Juin) Rents bicycles/scooters/motorcycles from €16/25/100, and also has Harleys from €130; talk to Thierry.

JKL (www.jkl-forrent.com; 59 angle de la Croisette) Rents luxury and speciality cars fit for celebs.

Mistral Location (www.mistral-location.com; 4 rue Georges Clemenceau) Rents scooters from €26 a day, bicycles from €16.

TAXI Find taxi stands around town, notably outside the train station and Palais des Festivals. Call ☎08 90 71 22 27.

Grasse

POP 51,300

Grasse is not the most picturesque spot on the Riviera. The town is an important administrative centre, with a huge suburban sprawl and neglected historical centre. It's also a leading international perfume centre. For visitors, this means that unless you have an interest in the perfume industry, Grasse has little to justify a visit. If, however, you entertain the slightest curiosity about scents, we'd definitely recommend a trip to the perfumeries or even a flower field nearby.

Sights & Activities

Perfumeries

PERFUMERIES

Grasse has more than 30 perfumeries, creating essences sold primarily to factories (for aromatically enhanced foodstuffs and soaps) as well as to prestigious couture houses. Several perfumeries offer free tours, taking you stage by stage through the perfume production process, from extraction and distillation to the work of the 'noses' (perfume creators).

Situated at the foot of the old town, **Fragonard** (www.fragonard.com; 20 bd Fragonard; ☎9am-6pm) is the easiest perfumery to

ROUTE NAPOLÉON

In 1814 French emperor Napoléon Bonaparte abdicated following his defeat at the Battle of Leipzig. He was exiled to the island of Elba in the Mediterranean but a year later, hearing rumours that he was about to be sent to the Atlantic island of St Helena, he decided to attempt to seize back power. Bonaparte escaped Elba and landed at Golfe-Juan; his plan was to reach Lyon via the Alps, to avoid royalist opposition, and he made it to Grenoble via Grasse, Dignes and Gap.

The road from Grasse to Grenoble is now the scenic N85 or **Route Napoléon** (www.route-napoleon.com), a favourite of road-trippers and bikers.

reach on foot; the tourist office can provide information about other perfumeries.

Musée International de la Parfumerie

PERFUME MUSEUM

(International Perfumery Museum; www.museesdegrasse.com; 2 bd du Jeu de Ballon; adult/child €3/free; ☎10am-7pm, closed Tue Oct-Apr) A great interactive museum about the history and art of perfumery.

Domaine de Manon

FARM

(☎04 93 60 12 76; admission €6) You can visit this family-run farm at harvest time to learn more about flower cultivation. Roses are picked mid-May to mid-June, and jasmine from July to late October.

i Information

Banks line bd du Jeu de Ballon, but none changes currency.

Tourist office (☎04 93 36 66 66; www.grasse.fr; 22 cours Honoré Cresp; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun) Has information on accommodation.

i Getting There & Away

BUS The **bus station** (place de la Buanderie) is north of the city centre. Bus 600 goes to Cannes (€1, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes) and Bus 500 goes to Nice (€1, 1½ hours, hourly).

TRAIN The train station is 2km south of the city centre and linked to the old town and bus station by a free shuttle (6.40am to 8pm). Trains regularly serve Cannes (€3.80, 25 minutes) and Nice (€9, one hour).

Massif de l'Estérel

Punctuated by pine, oak and eucalyptus trees, the rugged red mountain range Massif de l'Estérel contrasts dramatically with the brilliant blue sea.

Extending east from St-Raphaël to Mandelieu-La Napoule (near Cannes), the famous Corniche de l'Estérel (also known as the Corniche d'Or and the N98) coastal road passes through summer villages and inlets that are ideal for swimming. Many of the coves (called **calanques**) are only big enough for a few families; access is generally by a small path, signposted from the road. These include **Le Dramont**, where the 36th US Division landed on 15 August 1944, and **Agay**, a sheltered bay with an excellent beach.

More than 100 hiking trails criss-cross the Massif de l'Estérel's interior. Many of

the most popular walks, such as those up to **Pic de l'Ours** (496m) and **Pic du Cap Roux** (452m), are signposted. Views from the top are breathtaking. Trails are open from 9am to 7pm – therefore, camping is not possible – and access to the range is generally prohibited on windy or particularly hot days because of fire risks, so check with the tourist office before setting off.

Fréjus & St-Raphaël

The twin towns of Fréjus (population 53,300) and St-Raphaël (population 35,000) bear the hallmarks of the area's history over the millennia.

The site of some great Roman ruins, Fréjus was settled by Massiliots (the Greeks who founded Marseille) and colonised by Julius Caesar around 49 BC as Forum Julii. It was settled thanks to the extension of the Roman road Via Aurelia, which linked Italy with Arles. The town's commercial activity largely ceased after its harbour silted up in the 16th century (Fréjus' town centre is 3km from the sea). The Roman ruins are scattered in and around the lively pedestrianised town centre.

St-Raphaël is better known for its natural wonders. Sitting snug at the foot of the Massif de l'Estérel, it became a fashionable hang-out in the 1920s, when F Scott Fitzgerald wrote *Tender is the Night* here. With the development of diving activities, St-Raphaël's fate as an adventure-prone destination was sealed.

St-Raphaël's centre is 2km southeast of Fréjus' historical centre, but the towns' suburbs have become so intertwined that they essentially form a single town.

👁 Sights

Roman Ruins

ROMAN SITES

(☎9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) Fréjus' Roman-times population is calculated at 10,000, based on the capacity of its 1st- and 2nd-century **arènes** (amphitheatre; rue Henri Vadon, Fréjus). It was once one of Gaul's largest amphitheatres, and it's hoped a comprehensive renovation programme (the site has played host to numerous archaeological digs) will breathe new life back into it.

The **Roman theatre** (rue du Théâtre Romain, Fréjus), north of the old town, is also a shadow of its former self. Much more gratifying is the small but fascinating **Musée Archéologique** (Archaeological Museum; place

Calvini, Fréjus), whose unearthed treasures include a double-faced marble statue of Hermes, a head of Jupiter and a stunning 3rd-century mosaic depicting a leopard.

Le Groupe Épiscopal

CATHEDRAL

(58 rue de Fleury, Fréjus; adult/child €5/3.50; ☉9am-6.30pm, closed Mon Oct-May) The jewel in the crown of the dramatic Episcopal ensemble is the series of rare, intricate 14th-century painted cornices of the **cloister** ceiling, depicting fabled as well as real animals and characters.

Built on the site of a Roman temple, the ensemble includes the 11th- and 12th-century **cathedral** and a unique 5th-century octagonal **baptistry**. The 12th- and 13th-century cloister acted as the antichamber of the cathedral. Some of its columns come from the podium of the Roman theatre. Admission includes a 10-minute film in multiple languages.



Activities

Sentier du Littoral

WALKING TRAIL

This clearly marked coastal trail (yellow markers) follows the stunning coastline for 11km. Starting at Port Santa Lucia, southeast of St-Raphaël's city centre, and finishing at the Beaumette lighthouse, you can cut short at any stage by heading back up to the coastal road and catching Bus 8 home (there are bus stops every 500m). The whole path takes about 4½ hours to complete.

Diving & Snorkelling

DIVING TOURS

St-Raphaël is a leading dive centre, with numerous WWII shipwrecks off the coast.

Euro Plongée (☎04 94 19 03 26; www.europlongee.fr, in French; Port de Boulouris, St-Raphaël; ☉Mar-Nov) offers introductory dives and courses as well as great two-hour snorkelling tours (€25). They're fantastic for families: kids will love spotting starfish,

sea anemones, urchins and other colourful Mediterranean residents.

Beaches

SWIMMING

With its 36km of coastline, St-Raphaël and the Corniche de l'Estérel claim no fewer than 30 beaches, running the gamut of beach possibilities: sandy, pebbly, rocky, long, cove-like, nudist...you name it, St-Raph has it.



Tours

Guided tour

WALKING TOUR

A guided tour (€5, two hours), run by the Fréjus tourist office and available in English on request, is the best way to get the most out of Fréjus' rich Roman heritage.

Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël

BOAT TOURS

(www.bateauxsaintraphael.com, in French; Gare Maritime, St-Raphaël) Les Bateaux organises boat excursions from St-Raphaël to Île Ste-Marguerite (adult/child €18/10) and the nearby Estérel mountains (adult/child €15/9). It also runs boats to St-Tropez (single/return adult €14/23, child €9/13) between April and October; check for seasonal schedules.



Sleeping

L'Aréna

HOTEL €€

(☎04 94 17 09 40; www.hotel-frejus-arena.com; 145 rue du Général de Gaulle, Fréjus; d €95-170; 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷) This elegant hotel with its sienna-coloured walls and lush garden is delightful and ideally located to explore Fréjus' Roman ruins. The 39 comfortable rooms are decked out in warm Provençal prints. Those in the Jasmine annexe are more spacious but there is no lift in that building.

Hôtel Cyrnos

HOTEL €

(☎04 94 95 17 13; www.hotel-cyrnos.com; 840 bd Alphonse Juin, St-Raphaël; d €40-80) This beautiful 1883 mansion has kept much of its early-20th-century Riviera charm, with its grand staircase, terracotta-tiled floors, spacious balconies and wonderfully cool garden. The rooms are simple but comfortable, and Hélène and Patrick are charming hosts. A mere 300m from the beach, it's also ideally located for the *sentier du littoral* walks.

Auberge de Jeunesse Fréjus-St-Raphaël

HOSTEL €

(☎04 94 53 18 75; www.fuaj.org, in French; chemin du Councillier, Fréjus; dm incl breakfast & sheets



CENT SAVER

A seven-day **Fréjus Pass** (€4.60/3.10 per adult/child) covers admission to the Roman amphitheatre, theatre and archaeological museum (otherwise, it's €2 per sight). To visit the Groupe Épiscopal as well, buy a seven-day **Fréjus Pass Intégral** (€6.50) instead. Participating sights sell passes, except the Groupe Épiscopal.

€15.50; ☺closed mid-Nov–Feb; 📞) A rambling HI-affiliated hostel set in 10 hectares of pine trees, where you can also pitch your tent. Take Bus 7 from St-Raphaël or Fréjus train stations to stop Les Chênes, then cross the roundabout and take chemin du Couillier on your left; the hostel is 600m ahead. There is a daily lock-out between noon and 5.30pm.



Eating



Les Charavins TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎04 94 95 03 76; 36 rue Charabois; mains €18-26; ☺dinner Thu–Tue, lunch Thu, Fri, Mon & Tue) Dining at this jolly wine bar, run by the formidable Philippe Fournémont, a former Michelin-starred chef and wine connoisseur, is all about enjoying the finer pleasures of life. The cuisine is resolutely French, traditional and cooked to perfection: try the homemade foie gras with shallot jam or the oversized macaroni with sausages and sea urchin, and don't even think about turning down Philippe's wine suggestion, it would be akin to lese-majesty!

Le Poivrier

FUSION €€

(☎04 94 52 28 50; 52 place Paul Albert Février; lunch/dinner menu €16/30; ☺Tue–Sat) Tucked away on one of Fréjus' pretty market squares, you'd never guess from the cute alfresco set-up that downstairs is a grandiose vaulted dining room with a monumental fireplace. A Templar's cross on the wall suggests this was a garrison room many centuries ago. Nowadays, Le Poivrier is a wonderful address serving exquisitely fresh dishes inspired by local traditions and far-away climes (the owner is an avid traveller).

L'Arbousier

GASTRONOMIC €€

(☎04 94 95 25 00; www.arbousier.net; 6 av de Valescure; lunch/dinner menu €30/44, mains €35; ☺closed Mon & Tue in winter) One of St-Raphaël's best-known restaurants, the cuisine is a subtle blend of French *gastronomie* and world influences best enjoyed under the shade of the *arbousiers* (strawberry trees).



Information

BNP (232 rue Jean Jaurès, Fréjus) Just west of the tourist office; there's an ATM.

Post office Fréjus (av Aristide Briand); St-Raphaël (av Victor Hugo)

Tourist office Fréjus (☎04 94 51 83 83; www.frejus.fr; 249 rue Jean Jaurès; ☺9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Sat, also open Sun Jul & Aug); St-Raphaël (☎04 94 19 52

52; www.saint-raphael.com; 99 quai Albert 1er; ☺9am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Mon–Sat; 📞)



Getting There & Away

BUS Bus 5, part of the **AggloBus** (www.agglo-frejus-saintraphael.fr, in French) network, links Fréjus train station and place Paul Vernet (also in Fréjus) with St-Raphaël.

TRAIN Fréjus and St-Raphaël are on the train line from Nice to Marseille. There's a frequent service (€11, 50 minutes) from Nice to St-Raphaël Valescure train station, with breathtaking views of the Med and red slopes of the Estérel.

St-Tropez

POP 5700

In the soft autumn or winter light, it's hard to believe that the pretty terracotta fishing village of St-Tropez is yet another stop on the Riviera celebrity circuit. It seems far removed from its glitzy siblings further up the coast, but come spring or summer, it's a different world: the town's population increases tenfold, prices triple and fun-seekers come in droves to party till dawn, strut their stuff and enjoy the creature comforts of an exclusive beach.

If you can at all avoid visiting in July and August, do. But if not, take heart: it's always fun to play 'I spy...' (a celebrity).

History

St-Tropez acquired its name in AD 68 when a Roman officer named Torpes was beheaded on Nero's orders in Pisa, and packed into a boat with a dog and a rooster to devour his remains. His headless corpse washed up here intact, leading the villagers to adopt him as their patron saint.

For centuries St-Tropez remained a peaceful little fishing village, attracting painters like pointillist Paul Signac, but few tourists. That changed dramatically in 1956 when *Et Dieu Créa la Femme* (And God Created Woman) was shot here starring Brigitte Bardot (aka BB), catapulting the village into the international limelight.



Sights

Musée de l'Annonciade

ART MUSEUM

(place Grammont, Vieux Port; adult/child €6/4; ☺10am–noon & 3–7pm Wed–Mon, closed Nov) Displayed in a disused chapel, the Musée de l'Annonciade displays an impressive collection of artworks by Matisse, Bonnard, Dufy

and especially Signac, who set up his home and studio in St-Tropez.

Citadelle de St-Tropez

MONUMENT

(admission €2.50; ☉10am-6.30pm) The panoramas of St-Tropez' bay from the elevated 17th-century Citadelle de St-Tropez are worth the climb.



Activities

Beaches

BEACHES

The glistening sandy **Plage de Tahiti**, 4km southeast of town, morphs into the celebrity-studded **Plage de Pampelonne**, which in summer incorporates a sequence of exclusive restaurant/clubs. The bus to Ramatuelle stops at various points along a road that runs about 1km inland from the beach. Beach mats can be rented for around €15 per day.

Sentier du Littoral

WALKING TRAIL

Marked by yellow ('easy') blazes, a 35km **coastal trail** starts from St-Tropez' old fishing quarter La Ponche, and arcs around the Presqu'île de St-Tropez to Cavalaire-sur-Mer along a spectacular series of rocky outcrops and hidden bays. Allow 2½ hours to Plage des Salins and 3½ hours to Plage de Tahiti. The tourist office has a free easy-

to-follow map showing distances and average walking times.



Sleeping

St-Tropez is no shoestring destination, but there are plenty of camping grounds to the southeast along Plage de Pampelonne. Most hotels close at some stage in winter; the tourist office keeps a list. Also, if you're planning to drive, find out if your hotel has parking and how much it costs.



Lou Cagnard

HOTEL €€

(☎04 94 97 04 24; www.hotel-lou-cagnard.com; 18 av Paul-Rousset; d €69-140, tr €160; ☹☹) Book well ahead for this great-value courtyard charmer, shaded by lemon and fig trees, and owned by schooled hoteliers. Rooms inside the former home are spotlessly kept, decorated with painted Provençal furniture. Five have ground-floor garden terraces. Top-end extras include lighted makeup mirrors and in-room safes; 15 of the 19 rooms have air-con; ask when booking.

Pastis

BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 98 12 56 50; www.pastis-st-tropez.com; 61 av du Général Leclerc; d from €200-350; ☹☹) This stunning hotel is the brainchild of an

ST-TROPEZ BEACH RESTAURANTS

Despite a new push to limit how much space beach restaurants can occupy on Plage de Pampelonne (St-Tropez' main beach), they currently take up the lion's share of sand. Yes, there are occasional public beaches, but St-Tropez' seaside scene is defined by its restaurants – and they're all wildly different. Mattresses (€15 to €20) and parking (€5) are extra. Most are open May to September (call ahead); all are marked on the tourist office map. Book lunch (well ahead) at one of the following.

Club 55 (☎04 94 55 55 55; www.leclub55.fr; 43 bd Path; mains €28-43) The oldest-running club dates to the 1950s, and was originally the crew canteen during the filming of *And God Created Woman*. Now it caters to celebs who do *not* want to be seen. The food is – remarkably – nothing special.

Nikki Beach (☎04 94 79 82 04; www.nikkibeach.com/sttropez; rte de l'Epi; mains €15-30) Favoured by dance-on-the-bar celebs (ie Paris Hilton and Pamela Anderson) who *want* to be seen. The deafening scene ends at midnight.

Plage des Jumeaux (☎04 94 55 21 80; rte de l'Epi; mains €22-30; ☹☹) First choice for families, with playground equipment and beach toys; tops for seafood. Open year-round.

Aqua Club (☎04 94 79 84 35; www.aqua-club-plage.fr; rte de l'Epi; mains €22-29) Friendly mixed gay-straight crowd – the most diverse by far.

Moorea Plage (☎04 94 97 18 17; www.moorea-plage-st-tropez.com; rte des Plages, Ramatuelle; mains €15-29) Moorea Plage is ideal for conversation and backgammon; tops for steak.

Liberty Plage (☎04 94 79 80 62; www.plageleliberty.com; chemin des Tamaris; mains €16-29) Clothing optional – eat naked. Open year-round.

English couple besotted with Provence and passionate about modern art. If it doesn't sound like an obvious combination, one look at Pastis will dispel any doubt: you'll die for the pop-art-inspired interior, and long for a swim in the emerald-green pool and a snooze under the centenarian palm trees.

La Mistralée

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 98 12 91 12; www.hotel-mistralee.com; 1 av du Général Leclerc; d from €330; 🍷🍷🍷) The flamboyant former home of hairdresser to the stars Alexandre (famously *sans* surname), this totally over-the-top 1960s-decorated hotel includes, for example, fabric presented to Alexandre by the king of Morocco. At night the restaurant (*menus* €50 to €60), tucked at the back of the luxurious garden by the mosaic-lined pool, feels like a palace from the 1001 Nights.

Hôtel Le Colombier

HOTEL €€

(☎04 94 97 05 31; impasse des Conquettes; r without bath €76, with bath €84-158; 🍷) An immaculately clean converted house, five minutes' walk from place des Lices, the Colombier's fresh, summery decor is feminine and uncluttered, with pale pink bedrooms, bright white Provençal *boutis* bedspreads and handmade lace atop vintage wood furniture. Not all rooms have air-con. Rooms without baths share a toilet, but have bidet, sink and shower, open to the bedroom; rooms with baths may only have a partial wall separating them from the bedroom. Enquire when booking.

Hôtel Ermitage

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€

(☎04 94 27 52 33; www.ermitagehotel.fr; av Paul Signac; r €180-300; 🍷🍷🍷) Kate Moss and Lenny Kravitz favour St-Trop's latest rocker crash pad, which draws inspiration from St-Trop in the '50s through '70s – disco meets midcentury modern. Ermitage plays off thrift-shop cool, all velour and lacquer, with rooms designed by celebs including Chloë Sevigny and Lapo Elkann. Its off-the-beaten-path residential, hillside location ups the exclusivity factor, and yields knock-out views over town. Swimming pool slated for 2011.

Kube Hôtel

DESIGNER HOTEL €€€

(☎04 94 97 20 00; www.kubehotel.com; 13 chemin de Rogon de la Valette, Gassin; r from €390; 🍷🍷🍷) Why go to a nightclub when you can sleep at one? The hotel houses several bars, and neon-black-lit corridors (carry a flashlight) lead to chichi guest-

rooms with glitter wallpaper. All you need bring is an attitude.

Les Palmiers

HOTEL €€

(☎04 94 97 01 61; www.hotel-les-palmiers.com; 26 bd Vasserot; d €89-189; 🍷) Opposite place des Lices, in an old villa, Les Palmiers has friendly service and simple rooms. Choose one in the main building rather than the annexe.

La Maison Blanche

DESIGNER HOTEL €€€

(☎04 94 97 52 66; www.hotellamaisonblanche.com; place des Lices; d from €220; 🍷closed Feb; 🍷) An ode to minimalist design, La Maison Blanche has spared no expense in its pursuit of comfort and elegance.



Eating

Quai Jean Jaurès on the old port is littered with restaurants and cafés – they have mediocre menus, but strategic views of the opulent wealth of nearby yachts. Many establishments close during the winter so your choice may be drastically reduced.

Auberge des Maures

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 94 97 01 50; 4 rue du Docteur Boutin; menu €49, mains €31-39; 🍷dinner) The town's oldest restaurant remains the locals' choice for always-good, copious portions of earthy Provençal cooking, like *daube* or tapenade-stuffed lamb shoulder. Book a table (essential) on the leafy courtyard.

Le Sporting

BRASSERIE €€

(☎04 94 97 00 65; place des Lices; mains €14-24; ☺8am-1am) There's a bit of everything on the menu at always-packed Le Sporting, but the speciality is hamburger topped with foie gras and morel cream sauce (surprisingly great, if gut-busting). The Brittany-born owner also serves perfect buckwheat crêpes, honest lunch deals, and a simple salad and *croque monsieur* (open-faced grilled cheese with béchamel sauce). Draw-back: cigarette smoke, especially near the open storefront. Reservations essential.

Brasserie des Arts

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 94 40 27 37; www.brasseriledesarts.com; 5 place des Lices; mains/menu €20/29) Wedged in a line-up of eating/drinking terraces jockeying for attention on St-Tropez' people-watching square, BA, as it is known, is where the locals go. Out of season ask for a table at the back to experience the real vibe. Unless you're feeling flush, skip à la carte: the fixed three-course menu is gourmet and excellent value.

Auberge de l'Oumède

PROVENÇAL €€€

(☎04 94 44 11 11; www.aubergedeloumede.com; Chemin de l'Oumède, Ramatuelle; mains €39-59; ☺dinner, closed Sun & Mon Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) Epicureans come from far and wide to savour Jean-Pierre Frezia's divine Provençal cuisine in the idyllic setting of his hilltop *mas* (traditional Provençal stone building). With red mullet and spinach cannelloni, grilled catch of the day and sensational desserts, all accompanied by some *very* fine wines, dining at l'Oumède is a once-in-a-lifetime treat.

La Tarte Tropézienne

CAFÉ €

(☎04 94 97 71 42; www.tarte-tropezienne.com; 36 rue Georges Clémenceau; ☺7am-7.30pm) A must-try is the local speciality, *tarte Tropézienne*, an orange-blossom-flavoured double sponge cake filled with thick cream, created by a Polish baker and christened by BB in the 1950s. This bakery, the original creator, is the best place to buy one. For an informal sit-down lunch, head to the café of the same name on place des Lices, where you can undo the goodness of the salads (€10 to €15) with a piece of *tarte*.

Self-Catering**Place des Lices market**

MARKET

(☺mornings Tue & Sat) A highlight of local life: people come for the gossip as much as the colourful stalls.

Monoprix

SUPERMARKET

(9 av du Général Leclerc; ☺8am-8pm Mon-Sat) For groceries.

**Drinking & Entertainment**

Looks – and deep pockets – are an essential accessory for a night out in St-Tropez. Don't bother turning up in shorts and trainers, it's bling, heels and hairspray that does it for doormen.

In winter most bars only open on weekends, but in summer it's party central seven days a week.

Ice Bar

THEME BAR

(☎04 94 97 20 00; www.kubehotel.com; 13 chemin de Rogon de la Valette, Gassin; admission €30; ☺6.30pm-1am) Reservations are essential at this bar made of ice, where admission gets you four Grey Goose vodka cocktails, which you must consume within 30 minutes. Then you leave. Parka, gloves and hat included. Best between 11pm and 1am.

L'Esquinade

NIGHTCLUB

(rue du Four; ☺11pm to 5am, closed Mon-Fri Oct-May) Where the party winds up when you want to dance till dawn. The only club open year-round is also the Tropéziens' top choice.

L'Octave Café

NIGHTCLUB

(☎04 94 97 22 56; place de la Garonne; ☺8pm-5am, closed Nov-Mar) Twirl in a cocktail dress at this intimate club with live band that plays standards and pop – ideal on date night. Dress to impress.

Bar at l'Ermitage

LOUNGE BAR

(www.ermitagehotel.fr; av Paul Signac; ☺5pm-midnight) Escape the crowds at the laid-back Ermitage, kitted out in distressed '50s-modern furniture, worn floor tiles and wobbly antique café tables. Knockout views.

Bar du Port

BAR

(www.barduport.com; quai Suffren; ☺7am-3am) A young, happening bar for beautiful people, with a chichi decor in shades of white and silver.

Les Caves du Roy

NIGHTCLUB

(www.byblos.com; Hôtel Byblos, av Paul Signac) The star-studded bar of the infamous Hôtel Byblos. The music is better on the top floor. Come dressed to the nines.

Café de Paris

CAFÉ

(www.saint-tropez.com/cafe-de-paris; Hotel Sube, quai Suffren; ☺8am-2am) The outdoor terrace is *the* place to sport your new strappy sandals over aperitifs at five. Or come in the morning for the €13 continental breakfast – a good deal in St-Tropez.

**Shopping****Atelier Rondini**

SANDALS

(www.rondini.fr; 16 rue Georges Clémenceau) When Colette returned to St-Tropez from Greece, she brought back a pair of sandals, which she took to her cobbler to replicate. That cobbler was Atelier Rondini, open since 1927 and still making the same sandals for about €120. You can only get them in town, and they can't be shipped. If you don't find any that fit they can be made to order, but it takes a week and you must come in person for the final fitting and pickup.

K Jacques

SANDALS

(www.kjacques.com; 25 rue Allard & 16 rue Seillon) St-Tropez' other sandal-maker supplies

more celebrities because but it exports and does internet business.

i Information

The English-language brochure *Out and About* is available in tourist offices in the area.

Bay of St-Tropez (www.bay-of-saint-tropez.com) A good information source for the surrounding towns and beaches.

Crédit Lyonnais (21 quai Suffren) At the port.

Kreatik Café (www.kreatik.com; 19 av Général Leclerc; per hr €7; ☎9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun) Even the internet café looks fit for celebrities.

Master Change (18 rue du Général Allard) The town's only currency exchange.

Post office (place Celli)

Tourist office (☎04 94 97 45 21; www.ot-saint-tropez.com; quai Jean Jaurès; ☎9.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm) Keeps a useful list of hotels and restaurants open in the low season.

i Getting There & Away

BOAT Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël (www.bateauxsaintraphael.com, in French) runs boats between St-Raphaël and St-Tropez (single/return adult €14/23, child €9/13) from April to October.

Trans Côte d'Azur (www.trans-cote-azur.com) runs day trips from Nice (adult/child €55/41) and Cannes (adult/child €41/28) between April and September.

Les Bateaux Verts (www.bateauxverts.com; Ste-Maxime) operates a shuttle boat between Ste-Maxime and St-Tropez (one way adult/child €7/3.75, 20 minutes), and Port Grimaud (adult/child €6.50/3.50, 15 minutes) from February to October and for a couple of weeks around Christmas and New Year.

BUS St-Tropez' bus station (av Général de Gaulle), on the southwestern edge of town on the main road, also has an **information office** (☎8.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat).

VarLib (www.varlib.fr, in French) tickets cost just €2 for anywhere within the Var *département* (except Toulon-Hyères airport), including Ramatuelle (35 minutes), St-Raphaël (1½ hours) via Grimaud and Port Grimaud, and Fréjus (€9, one hour). Buses to Toulon (two hours, seven daily, less in summer) stop at Le Lavandou (one hour) and Hyères (1½ hours). There are four daily buses to Toulon-Hyères airport (€15; 1½ hours).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE To avoid the worst of the high-season traffic, approach from the A8 motorway and exit at Le Muy (exit 35). Take the D558 road across the Massif des Maures, via La Garde Freinet to Port Grimaud, then park here

and take the shuttle boat that runs to St-Tropez from Easter to October.

i Getting Around

If you'd like to retain some sort of inner peace while in St-Tropez, you're strongly advised to opt for two wheels rather than four: traffic here is infamous. To find parking in summer, arrive in town by 7am; leave after 8pm to avoid outbound traffic jams. Overnight public parking costs over €40, and lots fill early in the day.

Car hire companies can be found on av du Général Leclerc.

Marine Service (☎06 09 57 31 22; Le Pilon) Taxi boat.

Rolling Bikes (www.rolling-bikes.com, in French; 14 av du Général Leclerc) Rents bikes/scooters/motorcycles from €15/40/120 per day, plus a hefty deposit.

Taxi ☎04 94 97 05 27

St-Tropez to Toulon

MASSIF DES MAURES

Shrouded by a forest of pine, chestnut and cork oak trees, the Massif des Maures arcs inland between Hyères and Fréjus. Roamed by wild boars, its near-black vegetation gives rise to its name, derived from the Provençal word *mauro* (dark pine wood).

Contact the **Conservatoire du Patrimoine** (☎04 94 43 08 57; www.conservatoiredufreinet.org; Chapelle St-Jean, place de la Mairie) in **La Garde Freinet** for various workshops, horse and donkey treks and weekly forest walks to see cork being harvested. Hiking and cycling opportunities abound, especially around La Sauvette (779m), the massif's highest peak. The village of **Collobrières** is the largest town in the massif and renowned for its wonderful chestnut purée and *marrons glacés* (candied chestnuts). The **tourist office** (☎04 94 48 08 00; www.collobrieres-tourisme.com; bd Charles Caminat, Collobrières; ☎10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, closed Sun & Mon Sep-Jun) has maps, information on guided walks and plenty of tips to make the best of the area.

CORNICHE DES MAURES

This coastal road snakes from La Croix-Valmer to Le Lavandou along the D559. In addition to stunning views, there are some superb spots for swimming, sunbathing and walking.

La Croix-Valmer's **Gigaro beach** is one not to miss, as is the walking path towards

Cap Lardier, which is one of the most beautiful, least-trodden bits of the coast.



Domaine du Rayol (☎04 94 04 44 00; www.domainedurayol.org; av des Belges, Le Rayol-Canadel; adult/child €9/6; ☉9.30am-6.30pm) is a wonderful spot. A former seaside estate rescued from ruin, it has been transformed into a stunning 20-hectare botanical garden, with plants from Mediterranean climates around the world. Paths meander down to the sea. In summer, call ahead for **snorkelling tours** (adult/child €18/14) of the underwater marine garden and botanist-guided walks. One of only a few sights open at lunchtime, there's an on-site café.

Le Lavandou (www.ot-lelavandou.fr) is famous for its 12km of fine beaches and 12 types of sand. The town has retained a pretty historical centre, and its 1000-boat marina is a prime evening-stroll venue.

Up in the hills, you'll find the quintessential Provençal village of **Bormes-les-Mimosas**. The vieux (old) village is spectacularly flowered year-round, with the eponymous mimosas in winter and deep-fuchsia bougainvilleas in summer. Old cobbled streets are lined with artists' galleries and boutiques selling traditional Provençal products, natural soap and essential oils. **Hostellerie du Cigallou** (☎04 94 41 51 27; www.hostellerieducigallou.com; place Gambetta, Bormes-les-Mimosas; d €136-173; 🍷🍷🍷) is a plush hotel with fantastic views and dreamy pool. Cheaper and utterly charming, also with sensational views, is **Hôtel Bellevue** (☎04 94 71 15 15; www.bellevuebormes.com; place Gambetta, Bormes-les-Mimosas; d €42-74; 🍷🍷🍷). Both are in the centre of the village.

For breathtaking views of the islands, the **Route des Crêtes** winds its way through maquis-covered hills some 400m above the sea. Take the D41 as you head out of Bormes-les-Mimosas past the Chapelle St-François; 1.5km up the hill, turn immediately right after the sign for Col de Caguo-Ven to follow 13km of tight bends and spectacular views. The light is truly exquisite in the late afternoon or early evening.



Relais du Vieux Sauvage (☎04 94 05 84 22; rte des Crêtes; mains €18-30; ☉closed Oct-May; 🍷) is the hidden gem of these hills. With 180-degree views you could only dream of, this restaurant and pool (most people come here for lunch and then stay all afternoon) is one of a kind. Owner Roland Gallo has been here since

1960 and clearly has no intention of ever going anywhere else (you'll understand why when you get there). The food is as sunny as the views: pizzas, melon and Parma ham, or whole sea bass in salt crust. The rte des Crêtes goes back down towards Le Rayol-Canadel on the coastal D559 after the restaurant.

You'll need a car to travel to Bormes and along the rte des Crêtes, but the coastal road is on the itinerary of the Toulon to St-Tropez **VarLib** (www.varlib.fr, in French; ticket €2) bus, which stops in most towns, including Le Lavandou.

HYÈRES

Despite its profusion of palm trees, the small town of Hyères is rather underwhelming. Much more interesting is the nearby **Presqu'île de Giens** (Giens Peninsula), a protected wetland harbouring amazing birdlife, including pink flamingos, herons, terns, egrets and cormorants. The **Maison du Tourisme** (☎04 94 38 50 91), housed in the same building as the **tourist office** (☎04 94 01 84 50; www.hyeres-tourisme.com; 3 av Ambroise Thomas; ☉9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), runs two-hour **guided walks** (per person €5) to the wetlands and salt marshes. Call ahead for dates and bookings.

ÎLES D'HYÈRES

For some inexplicable reason, these paradisiacal islands (also known as Îles d'Or – Golden Islands – for their shimmering mica rock) have remained mostly unknown to foreign crowds.

The easternmost and largest of this trio of islands is the little-visited **Île du Levant**, split into an odd combination of army land and nudist colony. **Île de Port-Cros**, the middle and smallest island, is the jewel in the islands' crown. France's first **marine national park** (www.portcrosparcnational.fr, in French), it boasts exceptional marine fauna and flora, which makes it a snorkelling paradise. The island is also covered with 30km of marked trails through thick forest, ragged cliff tops and deserted beaches.

The largest and westernmost island is **Île de Porquerolles** (www.porquerolles.com). Run as a hacienda in the early 20th century, it has kept many of its sprawling plantation features. There are plenty of walking trails, but the best way to get around is by cycling. There are several bicycle-rental places, as well as a few restaurants and hotels.

Getting There & Away

Boats to the Îles d'Hyères leave from various towns along the coast. **Vedettes Îles d'Or** (www.vedettesilesdor.fr) operates boats to all three islands from Le Lavandou, and between Port-Cros and Porquerolles in summer.

Le Levant return adult/child €25/21, 35 minutes or one hour (depending on which island the boat goes to first)

Porquerolles return adult/child €33/26, 40 minutes

Port-Cros return adult/child €25/21, 35 minutes

TLV-TVM (www.tlv-tvm.com) runs services to Porquerolles (return adult/child €17/15, 10 minutes) from the La Tour Fondue port at the bottom of the Giens Peninsula. It also runs services to Port-Cros (return adult/child €25/22, one hour) and Le Levant (adult/child €25/22, 1½ hours) from Hyères' port.

Toulon

POP 168,800

Toulon is no Riviera highlight. As a major port and naval base, it's nothing to write home about, unless you're a keen WWII history buff. It was here in 1942 that the entire French fleet was scuttled in the *rade* (sheltered bay lined with quays) to escape German forces. The city was practically razed following the 1944 Allied landing.

The main reason why you might find yourself in Toulon is that it is an important transport hub, with good train connections, ferries to Corsica and an expanding international airport.

Sights & Activities

Le Batelier de la Rade

BOAT TOUR

(quai de la Sinse; per person €10) From the port you can take a spin around the *rade*, with a

commentary (in French only) on the local events of WWII.

Plages du Mourillon

BEACHES

Good beaches for soaking up some rays are 2km southeast at Mourillon. Take Bus 3 and get off at the Michelet stop.

Mont Faron

WAR MEMORIAL

Towering over the old city to the north is Mont Faron (580m), offering a fantastic panorama of the bay. Near the summit is the **Mémorial du Débarquement** (adult/child €3.90/1.70; ☎10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun), a WWII museum commemorating the Allied landings that took place along the coast in August 1944. A **téléphérique** (cable car; www.telepherique-faron.com, in French; return adult/child €6.50/4.60; ☎9.30am-7pm) ascends the mountain from bd de Vence. Take Bus 40 from place de la Liberté and get off at the téléphérique stop. A combined bus and cable car ticket costs €6.

Sleeping & Eating

Hôtel Little Palace

HOTEL €

(☎04 94 92 26 62; www.hotel-littlepalace.com; 6-8 rue Berthelot; s/d €54/64; ☎@☎) The over-the-top Italian-inspired decor lacks authenticity but Little Palace is well run. Request a room on the ground floor if you have heavy bags as there is no elevator.

Grand Hôtel Dauphiné

HOTEL €

(☎04 94 92 20 28; www.grandhoteldauphine.com; 10 rue Berthelot; s/d from €60/66; ☎@☎) A clean, functional hotel, with newly refurbished bathrooms and efficient staff. The hotel has an elevator.

Le Chantilly

BRASSERIE €

(☎04 94 92 24 37; place Puget; mains €10-25; ☎6.30am-11pm) Going strong since 1907, Le Chantilly will sort you out for food, whatever the time of day.

AU NATUREL

Not a fan of tan lines? This coastal stretch of the Riviera is well endowed with *naturiste* (nudist) beaches. **Plage de Tahiti**, the northern stretch of Plage de Pampelonne in St-Tropez, is probably the best known. More secluded is **Plage de l'Escalet**, on the southern side of Cap Camarat on the Presqu'île de St-Tropez, a beautiful but hard to reach spot.

Most isolated is the oldest and largest *naturiste* colony in the region, which occupies half of the 8km-long island **Île du Levant**.

The coast's laid-back, let-it-all-hang-out attitude was the premise of Jean Girault's cult 1964 farce film *Le Gendarme de St-Tropez*, in which Louis de Funès starred as the policeman of the title, who attempted to crack down on local nudists.

i Information

Find banks along bd de Strasbourg.

Change du Port (15 quai Cronstadt; ☎8.30am-noon & 1.30-4.45pm Mon-Fri) Currency exchange.

Post office (rue Dr Jean Bertholet)

Tourist office (www.toulontourisme.com; 12 place Louis Blanc; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Distributes a useful monthly agenda summarising museum hours and events.

i Getting There & Around

AIR The small international **Toulon-Hyères**

Airport (www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr) is 23km east of Toulon, on the edge of the Giens Peninsula. Bus 102 (five daily) links the airport with Toulon's bus and train station (€1.40, 40 minutes).

BOAT Ferries operated by **Corsica Ferries** (www.corsica-ferries.co.uk; Port de Commerce) run to Corsica and Sardinia.

BUS VarLib buses (www.varlib.fr, in French) operate from the bus station, next to the train station. Travel within the Var département costs €2. Bus 103 to St-Tropez (eight buses daily) runs east along the coast via Hyères (35 minutes) and Le Lavandou (one hour).

The tourist office sells a **one-day pass** (www.reseaumistral.com; €6) that includes unlimited travel on local buses and commuter boats, and a return ticket for the Mont Faron Téléphérique. Single fare on local buses is €1.40.

TRAIN Frequent train connections include Marseille (€11.50, 40 minutes), St-Raphaël (€15, 50 minutes), Cannes (€19.50, 1¼ hours), Monaco (€26, 2¼ hours) and Nice (€23.50, 1¼ hours).

West of Toulon

BANDOL

POP 8800

To many, the name Bandol conjures up images of rosés chilled to perfection and noble reds elevating meat dishes to new heights. The seaside resort town of Bandol itself is lesser known, but with its 1600-boat marina, pretty beaches and steep hills proffering uninterrupted sea views, it's a long-standing favourite of French holiday-home owners.

👁 Sights & Activities

Maison des Vins

WINE TASTING

(www.maisondesvins-bandol.com, in French; place Artaud; ☎10am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) Bandol's 49 vineyards carefully manage their prized production (collectively held under the Appellation d'Origine Con-

trôlée Vins de Bandol label) of red, rosé and white. The Maison des Vins is the best place to find out more: manager Pascal Perier, a living Bandol encyclopaedia, organises tastings and keeps a well-supplied shop.

Sentier du Littoral

WALKING TRAIL

This yellow-marked coastal trail runs 12km (allow 3½ to four hours) from Bandol's port to La Madrague in St-Cyr-Les-Lecques, with the beautiful **Calanque de Port d'Alon** roughly halfway. The easiest way is to take the bus from Bandol to Les-Lecques (the tourist office has timetables) and walk back to Bandol at your own pace.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Key Largo

HOTEL €€

(☎04 94 29 46 93; www.hotel-key-largo.com; 19 corniche Bonaparte; d €75-105; ☎) Strategically located halfway between the port and the pretty beach of Renécros, the eight rooms with sea views (and private terrace for three of them) are an absolute steal. The remaining 10 still enjoy the same simple but stylish decor and look out on neighbouring gardens. And there are homemade cakes for breakfast no matter where you sleep.

L'Assiette des Saveurs

FUSION €€

(☎04 94 29 80 08; 1 rue Louis Marçon; mains €10) One street back from the busy marina, with its pretty street-side terrace, L'Assiette prepares classic recipes with a cheeky fusion twist – such as monkfish in orange sauce or satay lamb chops. It gets our vote for best value in town.

KV&B

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎04 94 74 25 77; 5 rue de la Paroisse; lunch/dinner menu €15/28; ☎lunch & dinner Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, lunch Sun) The address to enjoy local wine over tapas in a crisp contemporary bar à vin setting (we love the Haribo sweets on the bar).

i Information

Banque Populaire (31 quai de Gaulle) On the marina; exchanges currency.

Tourist office (www.bandol.fr, in French; Allées Vivien; ☎9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) Has a comprehensive guide in English.

i Getting There & Away

BUS VarLib (www.varlib.fr, in French) bus 8804 connects Bandol with Toulon, bus 8806 with Sanary. Tickets cost €2.

TRAIN Bandol is on the line between Toulon (€3.40, 15 minutes) and Marseille (€9, 45 minutes).

AROUND BANDOL

Bandol's 1500 hectares of **vineyards** spread inland across scenic rolling landscapes and stunning villages (you'll need wheels to get around). The most famous village of all is the hilltop **Le Castellet**, a medieval wonder culminating in a 12th-century castle. Its steep, boutique-lined pedestrian streets are chock-a-block in summer.



Les Quatre Saisons (☎04 94 25 24 90; www.lesquatreseasons.org; 370

montée des Oliviers, rte du Brûlat, Le Castellet; d incl breakfast €90-130; 🍷🍷) is a wonderful B&B sitting snug below Le Castellet. In their gorgeous *mas* (traditional Provençal stone house), Patrice and Didier have decorated five exquisite rooms in the purest Provençal style. All rooms open onto a central swimming pool; some also offer breathtaking views of the area. Patrice's *tables d'hôte* (set menu; €40 including drinks) is worth every penny. For a share of Patrice's culinary secrets, try his half-day cooking course (€40 per person).

Back on the coast, the pretty-as-a-picture seaside town of **Sanary-sur-Mer** is a stroller's dream. Watch the fishermen unload their catch on the quay (in winter you can regale in *oursinade*, fresh sea urchin served with a squeeze of lemon juice and a slice of buttered bread), or admire the traditional fishing boats from one of the seafront cafés. Wednesday's colourful **grand marché** (market; ☀7.30am-1pm) is the area's main market, drawing crowds from miles around.

NICE TO MENTON

The Corniches

Some of the Riviera's most spectacular scenery stretches between Nice and Menton. A trio of corniches (coastal roads) hugs the cliffs between Nice and Monaco, each higher up the hill than the last. The middle corniche ends in Monaco; the upper and lower continue to Menton.

Grace Kelly, Princess of Monaco, is strongly associated with this part of the world. The Grande Corniche appears in Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief*, as does the bridge to Èze on the Moyenne Corniche, and Kelly herself died in a car crash on the D53, a road linking the Grande and Moyenne corniches.

CORNICHE INFÉRIEURE

Skimming the villa-lined waterfront, the Corniche Inférieure (also known as the Basse Corniche, the Lower Corniche or the N98) sticks pretty close to the train line, passing (west to east) through Villefranche-sur-Mer, St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Èze-sur-Mer and Cap d'Ail.

VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER

POP 6700

This picturesque pastel-coloured, terracotta-roofed fishing port overlooking the Cap Ferrat peninsula was a favourite with Jean Cocteau, who painted the frescos in the 17th-century **Chapelle St-Pierre**. Steps split the steep cobblestone streets that weave through the old town, including the oldest, rue Obscure, an eerie vaulted passageway built in 1295. Looking down on the township is the 16th-century citadel. Beyond the port is a sandy beach offering picture-perfect views of the town.

ST-JEAN-CAP FERRAT

POP 2100

On the Cap Ferrat peninsula, this fishing-village-turned-playground-for-the-wealthy conceals an enclave of millionaires' villas, with illustrious residents both present and past. On the narrow isthmus of the town, the extravagant **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** (www.villa-ephrussi.com; adult/child €10/7.50; ☀10am-6pm) gives you an appreci-

TOP RIVIERA GARDENS

» **Jardin d'Èze** Thousands of cacti, the history of Èze and the most enthralling, sweeping views of the Mediterranean.

» **Jardin Exotique de Monaco** Stroll among century-old cacti and thousands of succulent plants, with stunning views of the principality.

» **Jardin Botanique Exotique du Val Rahmeh, Menton** The original botanical garden, beautifully maintained, and home to one of the last Easter Island trees (extinct on the island).

» **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, St-Jean-Cap Ferrat** Nine different gardens, all exquisite, in the grounds of this early 20th-century folly.

» **Domaine du Rayol** Mediterranean wonder and a unique marine garden.

ation of the area's wealth. Housed in a 1912 Tuscan-style villa built for the Baroness de Rothschild, it's full of 18th-century furniture, paintings, tapestries and porcelain. A combined ticket with the Villa Grecque Kérylos in Beaulieu costs €15/10.50 for adults/children.

The peninsula also has three **walking trails** with glimmering seascapes, and secluded coves for swimming.

BEAULIEU-SUR-MER

POP 3700

Some of the best-preserved belle époque architecture along the coast is in the seaside holiday town of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, including its elaborate 1904 **rotunda** with Corinthian columns capped by a cupola. Another belle époque beauty is the **Villa Grecque Kérylos** (www.villa-kerylos.com; av Gustave Eiffel; adult/student €8.50/6.50; ☺10am-6pm), a reproduction of an Athenian villa built by archaeologist Théodore Reinach in 1902.

MOYENNE CORNICHE

The Moyenne Corniche – the middle coastal road (N7) – clings to the hillside. If you want to enjoy the views, the bus to Monaco takes this road, so bag a seat on the right from Nice to Monaco (on the left in the opposite direction). From Nice, the Moyenne Corniche travels past Col de Villefranche, through Èze and to Beausoleil, the French town bordering Monte Carlo.

ÈZE

POP 3000

On the pinnacle of a 427m peak is the medieval stone village of Èze. Once occupied by Ligurians and Phoenicians, today it's home to one-off galleries and artisan boutiques within its enclosed walls (there's only one doorway in or out of the village). The high point is the **Jardin Èze** (admission €5; ☺9am-sunset), a slanting cliff-side garden of exotic cacti with views of the Med all the way to Corsica (on a good day).

To explore the village's nooks and crannies after the tour buses have left, stay at the magnificent **Château Eza** (☺04 93 41 12 24; www.chateaueza.com; rue de la Pise; d from €180; ☹☹), which also has a lofty gastro-nomic restaurant and terrace (lunch *menus* €49 to €59, dinner mains €50), with views of the Med on a plate.

On the seaside below is the village's coastal and very belle époque counterpart, **Èze-sur-Mer** (where U2's Bono has a villa). Èze-sur-Mer and Èze village are connected

by a spectacular (and steep!) walking path, where German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) mused about the theories that formed the basis of his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Now labelled **Chemin de Nietzsche**, the rocky path takes about an hour, and in winter it's the only link between the two villages if you don't have a car. In summer a shuttle bus meets every train at Èze-sur-Mer (on the train line between Nice and Ventimiglia, which also stops at Monaco and Menton) and takes visitors to Èze village.

Year-round, Buses 82 and 112 run direct to Èze village from Nice (€1, 20 minutes). There's a helpful **tourist office** (☺04 93 41 26 00; www.eze-riviera.com; place du Général de Gaulle) at the base of the village.

GRANDE CORNICHE

The Grande Corniche, whose panoramas are the most dramatic of all, leaves Nice as the D2564. It passes **La Turbie**, which sits on a promontory directly above Monaco and offers vertigo-inducing views of the principality. The best views are from the town's **Trophée des Alps** (cours Albert 1; adult/child €5/3.50; ☺9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun), one of only two Roman trophy monuments in the world (the other's in Romania), built by Augustus in 6 BC.

On a breezy spot in the village, **Restaurant La Terrasse** (☺04 93 41 21 84; www.restaurant-la-terrasse-laturbie.com; 17 place Neuve; 3-course menu €19.50, mains €9-20; ☹) serves a great-value three-course *menu*. Monégasques often come here for dinner when it gets too hot on the coast. The restaurant owners used to live in the US and will let American visitors ring their mother back in the US for nostalgia's sake!

The corniche continues to **Roquebrune**, a hilltop village where architect Le Corbusier is buried. **Les Deux Frères** (☺04 93 28 99 00; www.lesdeuxfreres.com; place des Deux Frères; lunch/dinner menu €28/48; ☺lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Sun, dinner Tue) is the choice restaurant in the village. Dramatically perched on a panoramic terrace, it has jaw-dropping views of the Med. Waiters wear formal black, and mains (traditional French cuisine) come hidden beneath silver domed platters. In winter, guests lunch or dine in the minimalist dining room with its contemporary fireplace. The lunch *menu*, including a half-bottle of wine, is good value.

Menton

POP 29,100

To the east of Monaco, the pastel-shaded, palm-lined seaside town of Menton is within walking distance of the Italian border.

Protected by the surrounding mountains, Menton enjoys a warm, near-subtropical climate that has made its good fortune: 19th-century European royals moved their winter residences to its shores, and Menton was Europe's biggest lemon producer until the 1930s. Production is much smaller these days but the sun-coloured fruit is celebrated every year during the February Fête du Citron.

For visitors, Menton's appeal is limited, with little in the way of sights or nightlife. It does have one excellent restaurant, however, which would make it an ideal lunch stop on a Nice to Italy journey.



Sights & Activities

Jardin Botanique Exotique du Val

Rahmeh

GARDEN

(www.jardins-menton.fr; Av St-Jacques; adult/child €6/3.50; ☉10am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Wed-Mon) This wonderful garden was laid out in 1905 for Lord Radcliffe, then governor of Malta. The terraces overflow with exotic fruit-tree collections and subtropical plants, including the only European

specimen of the Easter Island tree *Sophora toromiro*, now extinct on the island.

Musée Jean Cocteau

ART MUSEUM

(quai Napoléon III; admission €3; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) Displays drawings, tapestries and mosaics by the multitalented poet, dramatist, artist and film director. In 2005, avid Cocteau collector Séverin Wunderman donated some 1500 Cocteau works to Menton, which will be displayed in a new museum scheduled to open in 2011.

Plage de Menton

BEACH

With more than 300 days of sunshine per year, it's very likely you'll want to spend some time on Menton's free pebble beaches or private sandy ones.



Sleeping & Eating

Le Paris-Rome

HOTEL €€

(☎04 93 35 73 45; www.paris-rome.com; 79 av Porte-de-France; s/d €52/90, lunch/dinner menu €34/55; ☉lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue; 🍷🍷) By far the best place to stay in Menton, Le Paris-Rome sits right on the border with Italy. The 20-odd rooms are all individually and tastefully decorated, with styles ranging from contemporary Zen to Louis XVI. As for the restaurant, Menton finally has a gastronomic (Michelin) star. Chef Yannick Fauries prepares modern and creative cuisine, and has embraced the concept of informal eating with gastronomic picnic hampers (to order, €35) and a nibble menu (€19).

A Braïjade Méridionale

PROVENÇAL €€

(☎04 93 35 65 65; 66 rue longue; menu €28, mains €18-25; ☉Thu-Tue) In a beautiful stone-walled dining room framed by heavy wooden beams, A Braïjade's speciality is flambé skewers (think orange-marinated chicken and pesto-marinated prawns flambéed with Cognac). Not only does it taste good, it also looks fabulous (the kebab is flambéed at your table). The menu, which includes an aperitif, glass of local wine and digestive, is excellent value.

Sucre & Salés

CAFÉ €

(8 promenade Maréchal Leclerc; cakes/sandwiches €3/5; ☉7.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Opposite the bus station, a contemporary spot to enjoy a coffee, cake or sandwich. The desserts are a work of art. The pâtisserie also serves breakfast (€5).

FRUITY FÊTE

Since the 1930s, Menton's lemon cultivation has been embraced during its **Fête du Citron** (Lemon Festival; www.feteducitron.com). Every February, kitsch lemon-adorned floats weave processions along the seafloor, accompanied by marching bands and dancers in skimpy outfits, and the Jardins Biovès fill with giant wire-framed sculptures bearing thousands of lemons.

Five metric tonnes of the total 150 are used to replace fruit that rots during the course of the festival. Undamaged fruit is sold off at bargain prices outside the Palais de l'Europe once sculptures have been dismantled. Ironically, the lemons used for the festival come from Spain because Menton's lemons are too irregularly shaped to fit neatly on the floats.

Information

There are plenty of banks with exchange facilities along rue Partouneaux.

Banque Populaire Côte d'Azur (31 av Félix Faure) Has an automated exchange machine outside.

Post office (cours George V)

Tourist office (☎04 92 41 76 76; www.menton.fr; 8 av Boyer; ☺9am–7pm) Makes same-day room reservations. Has a list of internet cafés.

Getting There & Away

BUS **Bus RCA** (www.rca.tm.fr, in French) operates from the bus station on promenade Maréchal Leclerc, the northern continuation of av Boyer. There are buses to Monaco (30 minutes), Nice (1¼ hours) and Nice's airport (1½ hours). Fares cost €1, except to the airport, which costs €18.

TUM (Transports Urbains de Menton) operates local bus routes. Lines 1 and 2 link the train station with the old town (€1).

TRAIN There are regular services to Monaco (€1.90, 15 minutes) and Nice (€4.50, one hour).

MONACO (PRINCIPAUTÉ DE MONACO)

POP 32,000 / ☎377

Your first glimpse of this pocket-sized principality will probably make your heart sink: after all the gorgeous medieval hilltop villages, glittering beaches and secluded peninsulas of the surrounding area, Monaco's concrete high-rises, reclaimed land and astronomic prices might come as a shock.

But Monaco is beguiling. The world's second-smallest state (a smidgen bigger than the Vatican), it is as famous for its tax haven status as it is for its glittering casino, thriving performing art and sport scene (Formula One, world-famous circus festival and tennis open), and eventful royal family (its members regularly feature in gossip magazines).

For visitors, it just means an exciting trip: from an evening at the stunning casino and a visit to the excellent Musée Océanographique to a spot of celebrity/royalty spotting, Monaco is a fun day out on the Riviera.

In terms of practicalities, Monaco is a sovereign state but there is no border control. It has its own flag (red and white), national holiday (19 November), postal system (good for the card home to grandma) and

telephone country code (377), but the official language is French and the country uses the euro even though it is not part of the European Union.

History

Originally from the nearby Genoa region of Italy (hence the Monégasque language's similarity with the Genoese dialect), the Grimaldi family has ruled Monaco for most of the period since 1297, except for its occupation during the French Revolution and its loss of territories in 1848. Its independence was again recognised by France in 1860. Five years later, a monetary agreement with France and the opening of the Monte Carlo casino revived the country's fortunes. Today there are just 7800 Monégasque citizens, by either parentage or marriage, out of a total population of 32,000 (and 107 nationalities); they live an idyllic tax-free life of cradle-to-grave security. Alas, all other residents and businesses pay tax.

Ever since the marriage of Prince Rainier III of Monaco (r 1949–2005) to Hollywood actress Grace Kelly in 1956, Monaco's ruling family has regularly featured in gossip magazines. Albert II, prince since his father's death in 2005, hasn't escaped media scrutiny (he has no legitimate heirs but two illegitimate children), but his achievements as an athlete (he played for the Monaco football team and is a black belt in judo), his charity work and promotion of the arts have earned him favourable press. Engaged to South African Olympic swimmer and former model Charlene Wittstock in June 2010, Prince Albert was due to marry in July 2011 as this book went to press.

Sights & Activities

Casino de Monte Carlo

CASINO

(www.casinomontecarlo.com; place du Casino; admission to European/Private Rooms €10/20; ☺European Rooms from noon Sat & Sun, from 2pm Mon–Fri) Living out your James Bond fantasies just doesn't get any better than at Monte Carlo's monumental, richly decorated showpiece, the 1910-built casino. The European Rooms have poker/slot machines, French roulette and *trente et quarante* (a card game), while the Private Rooms offer baccarat, blackjack, craps and American roulette. The jacket-and-tie dress code kicks in after 8pm. Minimum entry age for both rooms is 18; bring photo ID.



(www.oceano.org; Av St-Martin; adult/child €13/6.50; ☉9.30am-7pm) Propped on a sheer cliff-face, the graceful Musée Océanographique de Monaco, built in 1910, houses a fantastic aquarium. There are eerie sharks and bemusing tropical fish, a tactile basin where you can touch a variety of sea creatures, and daily sessions with the aquarium's technicians to find out more about the ins and outs of running an aquarium. All signs are translated into English, Italian and German. One vast, columned floor explores the evolution of oceanography with amazing fossils and ship replicas. And don't miss the spectacular views from the rooftop terrace.

Palais du Prince

PALACE

(www.palais.mc; Monaco Ville; adult/child €8/3.50; ☉9.30am-6.30pm, closed Nov-Mar) For a glimpse into royal life, you can tour the state apartments with an 11-language audioguide. The palace is what you would expect of any aristocratic abode: lavish furnishings and expensive 18th- and 19th-century art. Guards are changed outside the palace at 11.55am every day.

Cathédrale de Monaco

CATHEDRAL

(4 rue Colonel) An adoring crowd continually shuffles past Prince Rainier's and Princess Grace's graves, located inside the cathedral choir of the 1875 Romanesque-Byzantine Cathédrale de Monaco. The Monaco's boys'

choir, Les Petits Chanteurs de Monaco, sings Sunday Mass at 10am between September and June.

Jardin Exotique

GARDEN

(www.jardin-exotique.mc; 62 bd du Jardin Exotique; adult/child €7/3.70; ☉9am-7pm) Flowering year-round, over 1000 species of cacti and succulents tumble down the slopes of the Jardin Exotique. For nongardeners, the main draw is undoubtedly the spectacular vistas over the principality and shimmering Mediterranean. Admission also includes a half-hour guided visit of the stalactites and stalagmites in the **Observatory Caves**. Access to the gardens is from bd du Jardin Exotique only. From the tourist office, take Bus 2 to the Jardin Exotique terminus.

Beaches

Monaco's beaches are in the neighbourhood of **Larvotto**, east of Monte Carlo. There are paying as well as free beaches.



Festivals & Events

International Circus Festival of Monaco

PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

(www.montecarlofestivals.com) The International Circus Festival of Monaco, held each year in late January, showcases heart-stopping acts from around the globe.

Formula One Grand Prix

MOTOR RACING

(Automobile Club de Monaco; www.formula1monaco.com) Brazilian triple-world champion Nelson Piquet famously likened driv-

Monaco

Top Sights

Casino de Monte Carlo	D2
Musée Océanographique de Monaco	D5
Palais du Prince	B5

Sights

1 Cathédrale de Monaco	C5
2 Entrance to Jardin Exotique	A4
3 Jardin Exotique	A5

Sleeping

4 Hôtel Hermitage	D2
5 Hôtel Miramar	C3
6 Ni Hôtel	B4
7 Novotel	B2
8 Port Palace	C3

Eating

9 Casino Supermarket	B3
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10 Food Market	B4
11 Huit & Demi	B4
Le Nautique	(see 5)
Mandarine	(see 8)
12 Tip Top	D2

Drinking

13 Brasserie de Monaco	C4
14 Café de Paris	D2
15 Stars 'n' Bars	C4

Entertainment

16 Black Legend	C4
17 Cinéma Le Sporting	D2
18 Flashman's	D2
19 Fnac	D1
20 Open-air Cinema	D5
21 Opéra de Monte-Carlo	D2

Monte Carlo Casino

A TIMELINE

1863 Charles III inaugurates the first Casino on the Plateau des Spélugues. The atrium **1** is a small room with a wooden platform from which an orchestra 'enlivens' the gambling.

1864 Hôtel de Paris opens and the area becomes known as the 'Golden Square'.

1865 Construction of Salon Europe **2**. Cathedral-like, it is lined with onyx columns and lit by eight Bohemian crystal chandeliers weighing 150kg each.

1868 The steam train arrives in Monaco and Café de Paris **3** is completed.

1878–79 Gambling moves to Hôtel de Paris while Charles Garnier is charged with building a new casino with a miniature replica of the Paris Opera House, Salle Garnier **4**.

1890 The advent of electricity casts a glow on architect Jules Touzet's newly added gaming rooms **5** for high rollers.

1903 Inspired by female gamblers, Henri Schmit decorates Salle Blanche **6** with caryatids and the painting *Les Grâces Florentines*.

1904 Smoking is banned in the gaming rooms and Salon Rose **7**, a new smoking room, is added.

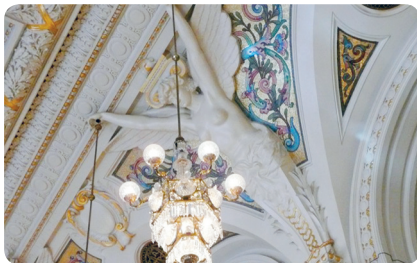
1910 Salle Médecin **8**, immense and grand, hosts the high-spending Private Circle.

1966 Celebrations mark 100 years of uninterrupted gambling despite two World Wars.

TOP TIPS

- » Bring photo ID
- » Jackets are required in the private gaming rooms, and after 8pm
- » The cashier will exchange any currency
- » In the main room, the minimum bet is €10, the maximum €2000
- » In the Salons Privés, the minimum bet is €500, with no maximum

JOHN VLAMIDES



Salle Blanche

Look up, away from the jarring wall-to-wall slot machines, to admire Schmit's caryatids, wings spread for flight. They illustrate the emerging emancipation of women, modelled on fashionable courtisans like La Belle Otero, who placed her first bet here age 18.

Salon Rose

Smoking was banned in the gaming rooms after a fraud involving a croupier letting his ash fall on the floor. The gaze of Gallelli's famous cigarillo-smoking nudes are said to follow you around the room.

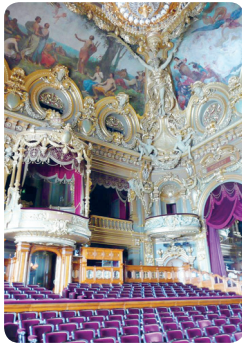
Hôtel de Paris

Notice the horse's shiny nose (and testicles) on the lobby's statue of Louis XIV on horseback. Legend has it, rubbing them brings good luck in the casino.

Hôtel de Paris

Salle Garnier

Taking eight months to build and two years to restore (2004–06), the opera's original statuary is rehabilitated using original moulds saved by the creator's grandson. Individual air-con and heating vents are installed beneath each of the 525 seats.



JOHN VLAMIDES



Atrium

The casino's 'lobby', so to speak, is paved in marble and lined with 28 Ionic columns, which support a balustraded gallery canopied with an engraved glass ceiling.



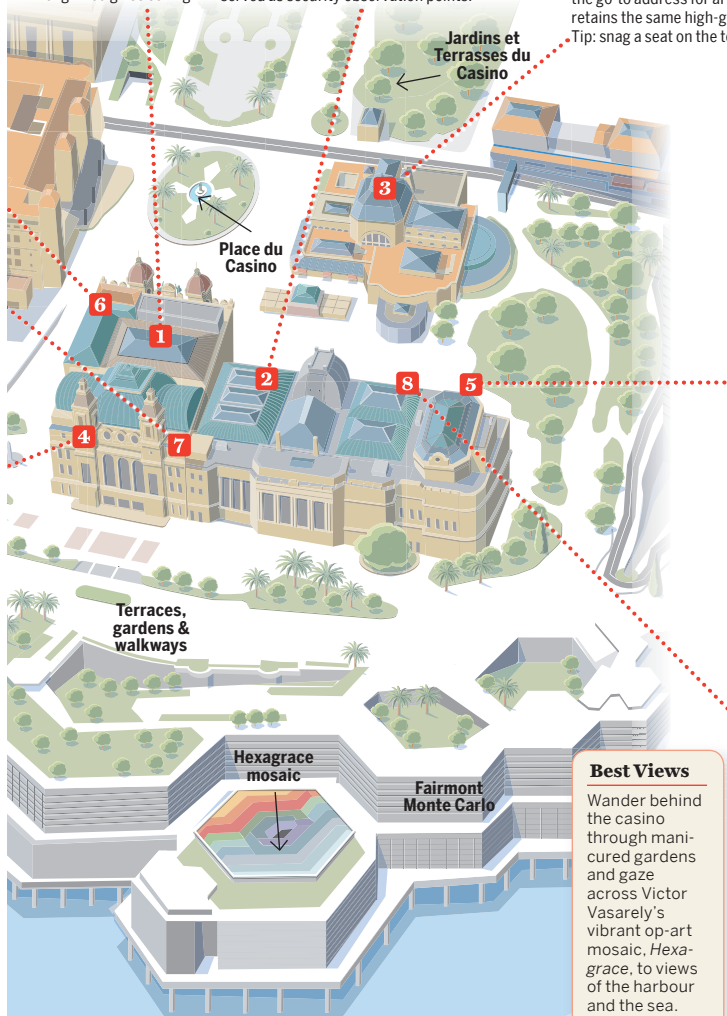
Salon Europe

The oldest part of the casino, where they continue to play *trente-et-quarante* and European roulette, which have been played here since 1863. Tip: the bull's-eye windows around the room originally served as security observation points.



Café de Paris

With the arrival of Diaghilev as director of the Monte Carlo Opera in 1911, Café de Paris becomes the go-to address for artists and gamblers. It retains the same high-glamour ambience today. Tip: snag a seat on the terrace and people-watch.



Jardins et
Terrasses du
Casino

Place du
Casino

Terraces,
gardens &
walkways

Hexagrace
mosaic

Fairmont
Monte Carlo

Salles Touzet

This vast partitioned hall, 21m by 24m, is decorated in the most lavish style: oak, Tonkin mahogany and oriental jasper paneling are offset by vast canvases, Marseille bronzes, Italian mosaics, sculptural reliefs and stained-glass windows.

Best Views

Wander behind the casino through manicured gardens and gaze across Victor Vasarely's vibrant op-art mosaic, *Hexagrace*, to views of the harbour and the sea.

Salle Médecin

Also known as Salle Empire because of its extravagant Empire-style decor, Monégasque architect François Médécin's gaming room was originally intended for the casino's biggest gamblers. Nowadays, three adjoining Super Privés rooms keep them hidden from prying eyes.

ing Monaco's Formula One Grand Prix, held in May, with 'riding a bicycle around your living room'. Monaco's cachet means it's the most coveted trophy nonetheless, and the narrow lanes, tortuous road layout and hairpin bends along Monaco's streets mean spectators can get closer to the action than at most circuits. Trackside tickets (from about €70 standing, €270 seated) for the event can be purchased from the Automobile Club de Monaco, but get in early as demand is steeper than the near-vertical streets. If you're dead keen, you can walk the 3.2km circuit; the tourist office has maps.

Sleeping

If your budget's fraying, consider basing yourself at one of Nice's hostels or budget hotels and taking the quick 20-minute train trip to Monaco. Prices soar during the Grand Prix.

Ni Hôtel BOULIQUE HOTEL €€
(09797 51 51; www.nihotel.com; 1bis rue Grimaldi; s/d from €120/150; ) This uberhip and modern hotel is the new kid on the block in Monaco. Its distinctive design makes bold use of flashy primary colours (the shower walls, chairs and stairs are made of see-through coloured plastic). Everything else is a sobering black and white mix. The roof terrace is in a prime location for evening drinks.


Hôtel Miramar HOTEL €€
(093 30 86 48; http://miramar.monaco-hotel.com; 1 av du Président JF Kennedy; d €145; ) This 1950s seaside hotel with rooftop terrace bar for those lazy breakfasts, lunches and evening drinks is a fabulous option right by the port. Except for the polka-dotted or stripy carpets, the decor is rather minimalist with plain walls and bedding. Seven of the 11 rooms have fabulous balconies overlooking the yachts.

Fairmont Monte Carlo LUXURY HOTEL €€€
(093 50 65 00; www.fairmont.com/montecarlo; 12 av des Spélugues; r from €350; ) The venerable North American luxury chain has that rarest of treats in France: king-size beds. Best rooms have sea-view balconies; our favourites also overlook *Hexagrace*, the giant Vasarely mosaic behind the casino.

Port Palace BOULIQUE HOTEL €€€
(097 97 90 00; www.portpalace.com; 7 av du Président JF Kennedy; r from €365; ) Built into the hillside overlooking the yacht

harbor, this discreetly sexy boutique hotel was styled by Hermès' artistic director, who used fine silks, Carrara marble and (of course) stitched buttery-soft leather, but eschewed the colour black. All rooms have water views; the best are up high.


Relais International de la Jeunesse Thalassa HOTEL €
(04 93 81 27 63; www.clajsud.fr; 2 av Gramaglia, Cap d'Ail; dm incl sheets & breakfast €18; ) closed Nov-Mar) The closest hostel to Monaco, in a beautiful spot right by the sea in Cap d'Ail.

Novotel CHAIN HOTEL €€€
(099 99 83 00; www.novotel.com/5275; 16 bd Princesse Charlotte; r incl breakfast €180; ) Kids under 16 stay free at this business-class chain. Book way ahead and score a €129 rate.

Hôtel Hermitage HOTEL €€€
(098 06 40 00; www.montecarloresort.com; sq Beaumarchais; d from €385; ) This opulent, fresco-cloistered, Italianate landmark hotel is well known for its plush interior. Sea views cost considerably more.

Eating

For those on a budget, a picnic is the best option. There are plenty of parks and benches to sit and take in the atmosphere, and you'll find a raft of sandwich bars and cheap eateries along quai Albert 1er.

Le Nautique CAFÉ €
TOP CHOICE (3 av du Président JF Kennedy; mains €9-13; ) lunch Mon-Sat) The clubhouse of Monaco's rowing club has million-dollar views and €10 lunches, served upstairs in a sunny linoleum-floored dining room overseen by manager Erminia, who's like your favourite Italian aunt who shouts *mangia, mangia!* until you've cleaned your plate. It's tricky to find, and ascending the stairs you'll think you're walking into an apartment building; look for the gym equipment at street level and the inconspicuous sign marked 'Société Nautique Fédération Monégasque Sport Avion Snack Bar'. Hurry: it's slated for demolition in 2013.

Mandarine GASTRONOMIC €€€
(097 97 90 00; www.portpalace.com; 7 av du Président JF Kennedy; mains €32-37) The casually sophisticated, glass-walled dining room at the Port Palace hotel has mesmerising views over the yacht harbour, and gained a Michelin star in 2010 for its seamless mar-

riage of earthy cooking, artistic presentations and thoughtful service. Monday to Friday there's a €36 lunch *menu*.

Tip Top

PIZZERIA €

(11 rue Spélugues; mains €12-24; ☎24hr) Tip Top is where local Monégasques gather all night long for pizza, pasta and gossip. Snag a booth by the bar to spy on the scene. At lunch there's a good-value €13 *menu*.

Cosmopolitan

MODERN EUROPEAN €€

(☎93 25 78 68; www.cosmopolitan.mc; 7 rue du Portier; lunch menu €19.50, mains €16-31) Cosmopolitan serves timeless international classics with gusto: say hello to fish and chips, three-cheese gnocchi or veal cutlets in Béarnaise sauce, all revisited by Cosmo's talented chefs. The result is refreshingly good and unpretentious, and tastes even better with one of the many wines on offer (including a dozen available by the glass).

Huit & Demi

ITALIAN €€

(☎93 50 97 02; www.huit-et-demi.com; rue Princesse Caroline; mains €13-27; ☎lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Very chic and very popular. You can savour your Italian fare indoors amid crimson-coloured walls lined with celebrity B&W portraits, or on the street-side terrace.

Self-catering

Casino Supermarket

SUPERMARKET

(17 quai Albert 1er; pizza slices & sandwiches from €3; ☎8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat) Has an excellent sandwich shop and takeaway pizza bar, both amazing value for Monaco.

Food market

MARKET

(place d'Armes; ☎7am-1pm) For juicy fruit and veg.



Drinking

Brasserie de Monaco

MICROBREWERY

(www.brasserieedemonaco.com; 36 rte de la Piscine; ☎11am-1am Sun-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat) Tourists and locals rub shoulders at Monaco's only microbrewery, which crafts rich organic ales and lager, and serves tasty (if pricy) antipasti plates. Happy hour runs from 5pm to 9pm.

Stars 'n' Bars

BAR

(www.starsnbars.com; 6 quai Antoine 1er; ☎noon-2.30am, closed Mon Oct-May; 📺) Any star worth his or her reputation has partied at this American western saloon: check out the gazillion pictures of in-situ celebrities and admire the Grand Prix paraphernalia

while you prop up the bar with a bottled beer or heavy-duty cocktail. Stars 'n' Bars also serves monstrous burgers.

Café de Paris

CAFÉ

(www.montecarloresort.com; place du Casino; mains €17-53; ☎7am-2am) Adjacent to the opulent Monte Carlo Casino, this is a fabulous spot for a decadent – if grossly overpriced – coffee or aperitif whilst limo-spotting from the sprawling 300-seat terrace.



Entertainment

Pack your evening wear for concerts, opera and ballet, which are held at various venues. The tourist office has a schedule of local events. Tickets for most cultural events are sold at **fnac** (Centre Commercial le Métropole).

Black Legend

NIGHTCLUB

(www.black-legend.com; 20 rte de la Piscine; ☎restaurant noon-11.30pm, nightclub 12.30am-5am) The over-30 yachting set swills cocktails at retro-'70s-fashioned Black Legend, with all-black velour snugs and a light-up dance floor copied from *Saturday Night Fever*. Before midnight it's a supper club (reservations essential, mains €25 to €40); after midnight DJs spin house. Drinks cost €20. Look sharp. No sneakers.

Flashman's

BAR

(7 av Princesse Alice; ☎8am-5am Mon & Wed-Fri, 7pm-5am Sat & Sun) The retro American diner-style decor with fluoro lights and chrome counter is rather funky at night. Happy hour is between 5.30pm and 8pm on weeknights. DJs start playing around 10pm.

Cinéma Le Sporting

CINEMA

(place du Casino) Often has movies in their original language.

Open-air Cinema

CINEMA

(parking des Pêcheurs) Has nightly shows from June to September, specialising in crowd-pleasing blockbusters, mostly in English.

Opéra de Monte-Carlo

OPERA

(www.opera.mc) Adjacent to the casino, the magnificent Opera de Monte-Carlo generally stages productions from October to May.



Information

INTERNET ACCESS Téléphone Européen

(30 bd des Moulins; per 15min/hr €2/5; ☎Mon-Sat)

ART ON THE RIVIERA

Every influential 20th-century artist seems to have come to the French Riviera for inspiration and left a little something behind: a chapel here (Matisse, see p838), a museum there (Picasso, p835), a few seminal novels (F Scott Fitzgerald, JG Ballard) or a masterpiece or two in lieu of payment at a friendly restaurant (check in or dine at Les Arcades p838 or La Colombe d'Or p838).

Many of these artists lived in the region: you can visit Renoir's rambling house and studio (p836) or retrace Matisse's steps from Nice to Vence (p825).

The region is also home to the world-class Fondation Maeght (p838), an outstanding modern art gallery where you'll be able to admire works by Miró and Giacometti, and other excellent art museums such as Mamac (p826) in Nice or the small Musée de l'Annonciade (p848) in St-Tropez.

MEDICAL SERVICES **Centre Hospitalier Princesse Grace** (☎emergency 97 98 97 69, switchboard 97 98 99 00; av Pasteur)

MONEY Monaco-imprinted euro coins are rarely spotted in circulation, and are quickly pocketed by collectors.

There are (naturally!) numerous banks near the casino. In La Condamine, you'll find banks on bd Albert 1er.

POST Monégasque stamps must be used to post mail within Monaco and to countries beyond; rates are the same as for France. There are post office branches in each of Monaco's districts.

Post office (1 av Henri Dunant)

TELEPHONE Calls between Monaco and France are international calls. Dial 00 followed by Monaco's country code (377) when calling Monaco from France or elsewhere abroad. To phone France from Monaco, dial 00 and France's country code (33), even if you're only calling from the eastern side of bd de France (in Monaco) to its western side (in France)!

TOURIST INFORMATION Monaco's **tourist office** (www.visitmonaco.com; 2a bd des Moulins; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-1pm Sun) is across the public gardens from the casino. From mid-June to late-September, additional tourist information kiosks open around the harbour and the train station.

i Getting There & Away

BUS Bus 100 is the main intercity bus linking Nice to Menton via Monaco. It stops at various places around the city; the tourist office has schedules and maps. Fares are €1.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Some 25 official paying car parks are scattered around the principality. One of the most convenient is the Parking des Boulingrins under the casino. The first hour is

free; the next six hours costs €2.40 per hour, and it's €0.80 per hour beyond that.

If you're driving (not really necessary in this compact little country), note that you can't take your car into Monaco Ville unless you have either a Monaco or 06 (Alpes-Maritimes) licence plate.

HELICOPTER **Heli Air Monaco** (www.heli-air-monaco.com; one way adult/child €120/80) helicopters connect Nice airport and Monaco in seven minutes.

TRAIN Trains to and from Monaco's **train station** (av Prince Pierre) are run by the French SNCF. There are three exits that go in very different directions: Fontvieille leads you to Av Prince Pierre; Le Port/La Condamine leads you to the harbour and bd Albert 1er; and Monte Carlo/Jardin Exotique leads you to bd Princesse Charlotte. To reach the tourist office, take the Monte Carlo/Jardin Exotique exit from the station, cross the street and take Bus 2 (direction Monaco Ville) or Bus 4 (direction La Condamine-Place des Moulins).

A train trip along the coast offers mesmerising views of the Mediterranean Sea and the mountains. There are frequent trains to Nice (€3.40, 20 minutes), and east to Menton (€1.90, 10 minutes) and the first town across the border in Italy, Ventimiglia (€3.80, 20 minutes).

i Getting Around

BUS Several urban bus lines traverse Monaco; Bus 4 links the train station with the tourist office and also with the casino. Tickets cost €1.

LIFTS About 15 *ascenseurs publics* (public lifts) whisk you up and down the hillsides. Most operate 24 hours; others run between 6am and midnight or 1am.

TAXI Minimum fare is €10. Expect to pay around €14 for a 10-minute taxi ride. To order, call ☎04 93 15 01 01.

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